'HIS OWN PRIVACY'

Frederic Manning: A Critical and Historical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis sets out to establish the fact that Frederic Manning is a writer whose work, hitherto regarded as too limited in its scope, its quantity and its quality to be exceptional, is actually diverse, productive and highly articulate, therefore justifying him a notable place in literature. The reasons given for that previous estimate are considered, and countered.

The study commences with an introductory chapter briefly covering the main events in his life, particularly in relation to his literary development. Then follow three chapters which discuss his writing, genre by genre - his poetry, minor prose works, and major prose works. In particular the chapter on his minor prose works covers ground not previously examined in such detail, being devoted to his reviews and his other critical writing, ranging through classical literature, and all eras of English literature, as well as through his critiques of noteworthy writers in French and Italian literature. In this genre Manning applies his knowledge, drawn from his outstanding breadth and depth of reading, to his theoretical appreciation of literature, while generally applying its practical value throughout his own creative writing.

Previous analysts have been satisfied to deposit Manning among late Victorian adherents to Arnoldian standards, who yet somehow managed to write *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, seen by them as an aberration from the norm. This study makes the case for his progression from the Pre-Raphaelites and the Aesthetes/Decadents of the nineteenth century, to a Modernist trend in him, traced from the originality he perceived in William Morris, Thomas Hardy, J.M. Synge, Henri Bergson's philosophy, and in his fascination with twentieth century developments in dramatic construction. The conclusion reached is that, based on the diversity of material and consistent quality of Frederic Manning's canon, his reputation as a writer will increase as further research comes to be devoted to his many-faceted life and works.

Every Man in explaining himself diminishes himself. Every man owes himself his own privacy. Every beautiful life is composed of solitary hours.[1]

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[1] Frederic Manning, *Poems* - a translation of the epigraph quoted by Manning from the works of Henri de Régnier.

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DEDICATION

With gratitude to my dear wife Penelope who, in a reversal of the ancient roles, brought home, 'many another | good thing, by which men live well and are called prosperous'[2], while I tried my hand at 'tapestries'.

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[2] Richmond Lattimore (Trans.), *The Odyssey of Homer*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), XVII, 422-23.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis on Frederic Manning (1882-1935) developed circuitously from my study of literary Modernism, a movement which began more or less in the 1890s and ended more or less in the 1930s. Part of my study was directed at writers active during World War I, particularly the so-called 'war poets'. The experiences they lived through, recorded and often ultimately died from were one extreme manifestation of the social forces motivating humanity to confront newly perceived problems and aspirations. These forces also found expression in the creative arts, through what came to be known as Modernism.

Frederic Manning's poetry was mentioned in a passing reference by Bernard Bergonzi, one of whose literary examinations of those times includes Manning as something of an afterthought among several famous names:

> in his second collection of poems, *Eidola* (1917), which were mostly in precisely written free verse and classical and literary in inspiration, Manning makes some reference to his war experiences [...] [he] writes about death with a delicacy that shows up the comparative crudeness of Aldington's treatment [...] [his] verse deserves something a little better than its present total obscurity.[1]

Contrasting with that measured approval, Bergonzi goes on to lavish a greater amount of praise on Manning the war novelist:

> From the moment of its publication in 1930 the novel was a great success; it was acclaimed by Arnold Bennett, who wrote, 'it depends for its moral magic on a continuous veracity, consistent, comprehending, merciful and lovely.' By any standards, *Her Privates We* is a fine novel, with a timeless quality that contrasts with the period flavour that now characterizes so many books about the Great War. For all its concentration on detail and narrow range, *Her Privates We* rises in places to the universality that distinguishes major literature.[2]

The unexplained gap of thirteen years between *Eidola* and *Her Privates We* in the output of a writer who exhibited 'moral magic' along with the ability to express 'the universality that distinguishes major literature', increased my curiosity to learn more about him.

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[1] Bernard Bergonzi, *Heroes' Twilight: a Study of the Literature of the Great War.* (London: Constable, 1965), pp.84-85.

[2] *op. cit.*, p.190.

Taken individually, those two quotations from Bergonzi suggest Manning was a writer of more than average ability, but one who had either failed to reach his potential or alternatively, if he had fulfilled it, the examples quoted were atypical of the rest of his apparently inferior writing. Another alternative was that he had somehow failed to attract adequate recognition. Juxtaposed, Bergonzi's criticisms suggest another gap, that of knowledge, even among scholarly critics, of the full extent of Manning's canon and therefore his significance. Yet given Bergonzi's praise, how is one to explain any of the above alternatives? Could Manning be, after all, a writer of deeper intellect, with greater scope and importance, than his reputation argues?

Some of the questions Bergonzi immediately provoked me to ask were these: what is known of Frederic Manning's life? what external forces influenced his development? what is the extent of his canon? was he a committed writer, capable of expressing himself across different genres? how have his efforts been judged by his contemporaries and by later critics? are those judgments accurate? if not, what do they lack? and consequently, what constitutes an enlightened assessment of Manning's ability? As my familiarity with his corpus increased, I steadily realised that Manning was a writer of substance, but nowhere, I found, in the existing research literature had all of those questions been addressed nor, among those which had, had the answers given been derived either from a thorough familiarity with his output or from an understanding of his aims. Therefore this dissertation, the first critical study of Frederic Manning's complete literary works, has been undertaken in order to rectify those omissions.

The Literature Review of researched material supporting this thesis is based upon the items given in the Secondary Sources section of the Bibliography, and comprises literary critical articles in scholarly journals

and two biographies. Since the journal articles have concentrated on narrow selections from Manning they cannot deliver an authoritative overview of his works. Collectively, critics named in the Review seem content to let stand as his epitaph a series of mostly one-word clichés such as 'unfinished', 'elusive', 'forgotten', 'enigmatic', 'exquisite', 'dual-faced', 'Epicurean', 'gentle and retiring', 'fastidious', 'precociously intelligent' and 'soldier, poet, scholar'. Thus an impression of Manning the person has taken precedence over Manning the writer.

Of the two biographies[3] neither is definitive as there are still gaps in our current knowledge of Manning's movements, this despite his living well into the twentieth century and his contact with many gregarious and articulate people. His obscurity is also due in part to his highly self-effacing and self-critical disposition, which severely limited his published output. Taken together they derive from his obsession with privacy. This obsession has been noted by Paul Fussell, among other commentators. Fussell remarks in his 'Introduction' to the edition of *The Middle Parts of Fortune* examined in this thesis[4], that the character Bourne, 'whom it is hard to resist identifying with Manning himself' maintains in his makeup, 'stubborn insistence on his independence and on his ultimate privacy.' Furthermore, although his biographers, Jonathan Marwil and Verna Coleman, approach their subject from different perspectives, they largely rely upon the same material, biographical and literary, and agree in their assessment of his life and estimate of his place in literature.

Marwil's conclusion is based on intuitions prompted by physically

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[3] Jonathan Marwil, *Frederic Manning: An Unfinished Life*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1988).
Verna Coleman, *The Last Exquisite: A Portrait of Frederic Manning*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1990).

[4] Frederic Manning, *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), pp.x-xi.

following Manning's movements and reconstructing his environment along the way, as well as by research into Manning's military record. But as the title of his work suggests, he saw difficulties in finding enough material to satisfy a publisher or a reading public, and thus opted to structure the presentation around himself as a detective.[5] Hence Manning is shown as a fugitive never quite captured, his embodiment refracted through the light of Marwil's own experiences. He summarises Manning's career as being 'too thin, too hidden, and too muddled by false starts and lost opportunities to hold the recognition won by early and late books'[6], but reaches this verdict from an uneven examination of Manning's works.

Coleman's rendition is more generous in its praise, and more comprehensive in forming a conception of Manning's character, its other difference being its noticeably Australian perspective. She devotes considerable space to interpreting several aspects of Australian life, including the state of artistic development obtaining during Manning's childhood and youth in Sydney. To a particular 'radical intellectual' then visiting the country, the things he abhorred

> were the boring provincial hedonism, the third-rate nature of the literary society and the sleaziness of the politics of New South Wales. He acknowledged, however, one great virtue. He found the emerging Australian type remarkably free from cant. And the bush life, with its sad, sweet charm, its pessimism and despair, was another world.[7]

Against this, 'it was small wonder that the English visitor often preferred "marvellous" Melbourne, which boasted elegant mansions and a more cultured ambience.' Coleman's Manning is her 'portrait' of a waif of the literary world who is uncomfortable in an environment constructed from her perceptions, made up of counteracting Australian and European influences,

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[5] A method well illustrated in A.J.A. Symons, *The Quest for Corvo: An Experiment in Biography*, (London: Cassell, 1934).

[6] Marwil, p.304.

[7] Coleman, p.9.

along with several other dualities combining contrasts. Manning disappoints both biographers by squandering his talents, but the weaknesses they identify, while real and regrettable, stem more from the flesh than from the mind and are insufficient to diminish, contrary to each writer's suggestion, the significance of what he did achieve.

Manning's lifetime spanned a period of rapid development in literature during which he was privileged to know, and work with, several most distinguished writers of whom some - T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Richard Aldington and James Joyce - came to epitomise Modernism. At the same time he benefited from an exceptional private education under his mentor Arthur Galton (1852-1921). His own literary contribution during that period of development is overshadowed by the exploits of more spectacular personalities, its eclipse intensified by his small output partly resulting from an unusually dutiful regard for Arthur Galton, heightened sensitivity and poor health, in addition to his above mentioned privacy fixation. Despite these limitations Manning did achieve noteworthy results. In his poetry, essays, articles and longer works he established an idiosyncratic position bridging the old and the new centuries. Contributing to a literary renaissance, he links the late nineteenth century Aesthetic movement, with the beginnings of the twentieth century search for fresh ways of identifying, measuring and stating humanity's re-evaluation of its place in the world.

Chapter 1 summarises significant events in an otherwise relatively obscure life. Manning won literary recognition from a few peers for most of his life and from the vast reading public for only a very short period of that life. Neither peer group, nor public, nor subsequent critics contributed much to Manning's reputation. Consequently he has been relegated to literature's sidelines, something which this thesis sets out to redress.

Chapter 1 also offers Manning's works in chronological order. There they are shown alongside other of his activities, such as his interaction with other writers. The aim is thus to provide a perspective on his development different from, and complementary to, the one presented in the subsequent chapters which study his works genre by genre. Those subsequent chapters concentrate separately on Manning's poetry in Chapter 2, then, in Chapter 3, on his minor prose comprising literary criticism, reviews and short articles. The extent of his minor prose writing, never before covered in such detail, shows the breadth and depth of his reading and its practical application to his own creative writing. Finally his major prose works are discussed in Chapter 4.

This compartmentalisation in the later chapters might not have pleased Manning himself since, in the introduction to his review of a book by Ernest Rhys, he censures the work for being

> one of a series of popular books dealing with English literature, in which, the publishers tell us, "literature is to be broken up into its component parts, and these parts studied analytically along the lines of their literary evolution." So the nymph Echo was treated, by frenzied shepherds, at the instigation of Pan.[8]

The typical Manning snub, with its equally typical penetrating sting in the tail, is felt. Nevertheless the format is defended in this instance in the belief that it offers access to a deeper understanding and appreciation of Frederic Manning's talents and objectives through the intensive study of each of his favoured genres, with due regard given in that study to the attributes specific to each. In any case his productivity tends to follow a pattern of composition by genre. Occasional items falling outside the pattern do not betray his standards and are easily reabsorbed into the totality of his canon.

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[8] Manning, 'Lyric Poetry', *The Spectator*, 1 November, 1913, p.683.

First impressions of Manning's works indicate that they contain examples of strong dramatic construction and characterisation, which he does not, however, develop into a separate theatrical genre. Similarly although the spirit of Modernism animates his late, wartime poetry he does not carry that spirit forward into the composition of any further poetry after 1917. His failure to exploit his obvious poetic talent may be compensated for by his achievements in his prose.

CHAPTER 1

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Frederic Manning died in a London nursing home on 22 February, 1935, following a lifetime of poor health. A few days later, T.E. Lawrence, his friend of several years, wrote to Manning's publisher Peter Davies:

> On Tuesday I took my leave of the R.A.F. and started southward by road, meaning to call at Bourne and see Manning: but to-day I turned eastward, instead, hearing that he was dead.
>
> It seems queer news, for the books are so much more intense than ever he was, and his dying doesn't, cannot affect them. Therefore what has died really? Our hopes of having more of him - but that is greed. The writing them was such pain - and pains - to him. Of late I had devoutly wished him to cease trying to write. He had done enough: two wonderful works, full-sized: four lesser things.
>
> A man who can produce one decent book is a fortunate man, surely? [...] His going takes away a person of great kindness, exquisite and pathetic. It means one rare thing the less in our setting. You will be very sad.[...]
>
> Strange to think how Manning, sick, poor, fastidious, worked like a slave for year after year [...] stringing words together to shape his ideas and reasonings. That's what being a born writer means, I suppose. And to-day it is all over and nobody ever heard of him. If he had been famous in his day he would have liked it, I think; liked it deprecatingly.[...] I suppose his being not really English, and so generally ill barred him from his fellows. Only not in *Her Privates We* which is hot-blooded and familiar. It is puzzling. How I wish, for my own sake, that he hadn't slipped away in this fashion; but how like him. He was too shy to let anyone tell him how good he was.[1]

Deliberate exaggerations intensify the sense of loss conveyed by Lawrence in his keenly observed miniature. He wrote the letter while he was emotionally vulnerable himself, motor-cycling to his retirement at Clouds Hill in Dorset. Yet making due allowances for Lawrence's caprice and his ambition to write for posterity, his words carry conviction. These Biographical Notes enlarge upon them.

Frederic Manning was born in Sydney, Australia, on 22 July, 1882, his father, Sir William Manning, being Australian born while his mother and all of his parental forebears were Irish. He lived in England practically all of his life from early adolescence. Although his health was chronically poor

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[1] David Garnet (Ed.), *Selected Letters of T.E. Lawrence*, (London: The Reprint Society, 1938), Letter No.242, 28 February 1935, pp.372-73.

he served with the British army in the first Somme campaign of 1916. He had no formal schooling but was educated by private tutors; he was naturally studious and showed early signs of literary ability;[2] through his mentor Arthur Galton he met, and became friendly with, several significant literary figures; he published three volumes of poetry, a collection of essays, the biography of an eminent naval architect, a classic war novel; he regularly contributed articles to *The Spectator*, *The Criterion* and other literary journals; and for twenty-five years entertained the dream of a great novel which remained less than half finished at the time of his death.

With the exception of the second edition of his book of essays and his war novel which were published by Peter Davies, Manning's other, earlier, books were published by John Murray, to which firm Henry Newbolt, as their reader, had initially recommended Manning's poems and essays. Manning acknowledged his gratitude to Newbolt in these words:

> I have much kindness to thank you for: Brunhild [*The Vigil of Brunhild*], of which Binyon has told me, and now your generous appreciation of this book [*Scenes and Portraits*] [...]. Mr Murray has agreed to publish the book. I am very much gratified by what you say of it, and flattered that you should think well of any work of mine.[3]

Criticism of his early work varied from mostly approval and encouragement for his poetry to genuine enthusiasm for his essays.

In 1907 Manning published his first major work, *The Vigil of Brunhild*, a long narrative poem in blank verse extolling the exploits of an historically remote warrior queen. This he followed in 1909 with *Scenes and Portraits*, a collection of essays. The critics, reviewing *The Vigil of Brunhild*, identified the poet as sensitive and talented but they judged the poem of limited public appeal as it projected outmoded Victorian prejudices

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[2] Marwil, pp.52, 58-60, 65, 102-3, 291.

[3] Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library, Letters of Frederic Manning to Henry Newbolt, 1908-12, 14 November, 1908.

into a revitalised new age. Much to Manning's annoyance they encumbered their criticism with allegations of Tennysonian overtones. *The Guardian's* reviewer of 26 February 1908 more acutely saw in *The Vigil of Brunhild*, 'rather the influence of William Morris than of Tennyson - and that is no discredit to the author', while another critic observed:

> The whole romantic, tragic narrative is given with dignity and power, and Mr Manning is therefore to be congratulated upon a successful rendering of an old story in an imaginative and interesting manner. His management of the much-abused vehicle of blank verse is, on the whole, admirable, and he has some excellent descriptive passages, some notable lines of thought and beauty.[4]

The *Times Literary Supplement* of 23 January 1908 reported that the poem 'lacked grandeur and passion, though it was clearly the work of one with a sensitive ear and fine taste'.

Scenes and Portraits, Manning's next publication, was very different in being a collection of essays inventing conversations between formidable thinkers, ancient through to modern, chosen as representative of their times, and comparable with Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* and Browning's *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in Their Day*. That book received widespread glowing praise. *The Edinburgh Review* probably came closest to intuiting Manning's creative urge while at the same time boosting Arthur Galton's high hopes in his pupil by equating him with Galton's revered Matthew Arnold:

> Since Mr Arnold, there has been no such ironist in this country as the author of *Scenes and Portraits*. Irony is not an English quality; and Mr Manning's is distinctly not an English book. It is Latin in its intelligence, in its disregard of consequences, in its presentation of the pure idea. If Lucian, Landor, Renan, and Anatole France could have collaborated, the result would have been some such work as this. We may prefer the English style, being English; disillusionment, we may think, is barren soil. It is. But while a Bible written throughout by the Preacher would be mischievous, Ecclesiastes has its place as a corrective. Calomel as a diet is poison, but an occasional

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[4] The Mitchell Library, The State Library of New South Wales, Manning collection, ML MSS 632, Vol.2, unidentified press cutting.

> dose of it clears the system. Irony performs the same good office: the [katharsis] in which Aristotle saw the main function of the drama, is profitable not only for our passions, but for our ideas.[5]

Scenes and Portraits won Manning the Edmond de Polignac Prize for the best publication of 1910, but the judges, Henry Newbolt, Edmond Gosse, Maurice Hewlett and J.W. Mackail, were obliged to withdraw the award when they learned that the book had been published the year before. Their new winner was Walter de la Mare. Manning could ill-afford to lose the prize money and the accruing publicity but he gritted his teeth and accepted the decision generously:

> Of course there is a drop of bitterness in the cup, and I do not say that the prize would not have been a great help to me just now, but the rest of the matter is so very pleasant, so like another prize itself, that if I were to slap my pocket I should not miss the money a bit. I certainly do not grudge it to the other man[.][6]

In August 1908 an event occurred which was to stimulate Manning's intellectual fervour. That was the arrival in England of Ezra Pound (1885-1972) from the USA via Venice, having left his homeland determined to establish himself in literary London. By January 1909 one strand of his efforts had led him to a meeting with Frederic Manning. Their meeting came about indirectly through an introduction from the publisher and bookseller Elkin Mathews of Pound to Eva Fowler (1872-1921), a minor Edwardian patron of the arts, through whom in turn Pound met the Shakespears, Olivia (1864-1938) and her daughter Dorothy (1886-1973), and thence Frederic Manning who had already socialised in that circle for several years. Pound cast them in a letter to his mother, 'The week has been fairly full [...] Tea with Manning and a certain Mrs Shakespeare [*sic*] who is undoubtedly the most charming

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[5] *The Edinburgh Review*, Vol.210, No.430, October 1909, Article VII, 'Thinkers and Ironists', pp.442-46.

[6] Beinecke Library, 30 November, 1911.

woman in London.'[7]

At that time Manning was not a distinguished literary figure, indeed he only achieved a brief notability more than twenty years later. However in 1909, at the age of twenty-six, he had published *The Vigil of Brunhild*, was preparing *Poems* and *Scenes and Portraits*, had individual poems and critical reviews printed in various prestigious journals, and was regarded by several respected authorities as a writer of promise.

Manning's scholarship, particularly in classical, medieval and Provençal literature, attracted Pound's attention and their friendship burgeoned accordingly. In the *Book News Monthly* of April 1909 Pound praised *The Vigil of Brunhild* for its 'old Saxon vigour and medieval glamour' and in a letter to his parents in March 1910 Pound wrote that he found Manning a more interesting poet than William Carlos Williams and:

> He is rather intelligent [...] We disagree upon most matters are pretty well in accord in the belief that we are the genuinest or at least the only significant writers under thirty. In which faith we write parodies of each other. compose poems upon each others frailties & vanities, abuse each other in public with a violence which terrifies the bystanders. In fact our friendship is as firmly founded as could possibly be desired.[8]

Obviously they both enjoyed the combative relationship. But interestingly, whereas Pound's pugnacity with Manning was typically spontaneous, Manning's with him was unusual. Elsewhere, unless strongly goaded, Manning reverted to his seemingly natural, much more guarded, self. Therefore, although stimulated by Pound's manner and intellect, he clearly limited the experience and decided early not to be drawn into copying the other's more ebullient example. For Manning, Pound never could be *il miglior fabbro.*

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[7] Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p.103.

[8] *op. cit.*, p.140.

Through familiarity each man's personality - Pound's mercurial and Manning's thin-skinned - gradually asserted itself, provoking quarrels amid the amiability before they finally lost contact with each other after Pound left England in 1920 to take up permanent residence abroad, firstly in France (where Manning last saw 'the Ezras', Pound and Dorothy) and then Italy. Typical of their verbal sniping are lines from Pound's poem 'Phasellus Ille'[9], of a '*papier-mache*'[*sic*] being whose 'mind was made up in "the seventies" | Nor hath it ever since changed that concoction', which was read by Manning as a gibe at himself, and Manning's assessment of Pound to a friend - 'What a damnable thing is this craving for originality, which [...] makes Pound write as if no one had written before him. I like Pound very much, but he will certainly be damned.'[10] Pound in turn wrote, 'Manning in one of his more envenomed moments once said [of Pound] something about "More like Khr-r-ist than the late James MacNeill Whistler every year".'[11] However, a suggestion by Manning's biographers, that Pound's marriage to Dorothy Shakespear had blighted Manning's own ambitions in that direction and had thus coloured his feelings, is merely conjectural.[12]

Frederic Manning had preceded Ezra Pound to England by some ten years, arriving in 1898, aged fifteen, from Australia. He returned only occasionally thereafter on visits to his parental home in Sydney where his father, Sir William Manning, prospered in business and politics. Frederic, the sixth of eight children, suffered a sickly childhood which reduced his total school attendance to a few weeks, the responsibility for his education thus falling upon private tutors. Arthur Galton, his final tutor in Sydney,

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[9] Ezra Pound, *Ripostes*, (London: Elkin Mathews, 1912).

[10] James Griffyth Fairfax collection, National Library of Australia, Canberra. MS 1750, Nos.75/76, 10 April 1909.

[11] D.D. Paige (Ed.), *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), Letter to Iris Barry, 13 July 1916, No.99, p.135.

[12] Marwil, p.76, and Coleman, pp.114-15.

recognised Manning's scholarly disposition and early signs of literary talent and, since Galton was the person by far most influential in Manning's life, no study of Manning can be complete without a statement about him.

Arthur Galton was, in Ezra Pound's words, 'an old friend of Mathew [*sic*] Arnold [...] & has known about everyone since the *flood* [*sic*].'[13] Certainly his academic, literary, ecclesiastical and Establishment contacts were numerous. The Galton family 'included bishops, priests, barristers and soldiers as well as men of science [including a cousin, Francis Galton the pioneer eugenist]. Galton also claimed links with the aristocracy through his Scottish mother Mary Duff, as the second cousin of James Duff, the Duke of Fife [which lineage had married into royalty through Princess Louise, The Princess Royal, daughter of King Edward VII], and as a connection of the Earl of Northumberland.'[14] In 1873 Galton entered Clare College, Cambridge, but converted to the Roman Catholic faith before completing his degree. He was ordained priest in 1880 and was sent to Windermere in 1884 where he met Matthew Arnold, who impressed him greatly. He left the Roman Catholic Church in 1885 and completed his university education at New College, Oxford. From 1893-95 he served a term in Australia as private secretary to his uncle, Sir Robert Duff, the Governor of New South Wales, and on the completion of that appointment Sir William Manning, a prominent Sydney business man, saw the opportunity to enlist him as an ideal tutor for his problematic son Frederic. Galton, aware of Frederic's potential, responded enthusiastically to this role, one not new to him, because years earlier at Oxford he had been mentor to Lionel Johnson (1867-1902), a cousin of Olivia Shakespear. Then, Galton's hopes, spurred by the precocious Johnson, had been dashed.[15] Now probably, in young Frederic his new protégé, Galton sensed a second chance to mould

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[13] Carpenter, p.140.

[14] Coleman, p.17.

[15] See Ezra Pound's 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley'.

another, more enduring, writer.

When Galton returned to England from Australia in 1898 Frederic Manning accompanied him. Galton was then re-admitted to the Church of England, ordained, and in 1903 was appointed to the parish of Edenham in Lincolnshire, where he provided a home for Frederic. During his lifetime he wrote literary essays on the Roman Catholic Church, Thomas Cromwell, controversial religious and political subjects, and published essays on Matthew Arnold. He was also a fine classical scholar and an ardent Francophile.[16] All of these influences are evident in Manning's writing.

Religious questioning, as a theme prominent in Manning's works, results from his domicile with Galton and consequent close observation of Galton's personal struggle to rationalise his misgivings with the Christian faith[17], a scepticism which was much more deeply derived than Pound's whose flair for intolerance left little room for sympathy toward Galton. Specifically, the germ of Galton's dilemma grew out of his exposure to emotional university polemics coupled with his infatuation for the Arnold family.

Historically, following the great schism of 1833-45 at Oxford, caused by the controversy waged between the Tractarians and their opponents, repercussions were felt there, and beyond, during most of the remainder of the nineteenth century. The Tractarians' contention that the Church of England was being led astray from its belief in Apostolic Succession and in observance of the Sacraments, was countered by their opponents who supported

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[16] Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz (Eds.), *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909-1914*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), pp.344-45.

[17] Pound and Litz (Eds.), p.307, No.217 - Ezra Pound to Henry Hope Shakespear when asking for his daughter Dorothy's hand in marriage, 16 February, 1914 - 'I count myself much more a priest than I do some sceptic who is merely being paid for public pretense of something he has probably never considered. It would be intolerable for instance to be put through a religious ceremony by an atheist like Galton, or by a cad like the bishop [*sic*] of London, who are fair examples of the upper sort of clergy.'

modern Biblical criticism advocating that Scripture must be interpreted like any other writing, a process that involved scientific investigation of the language and the history of the Bible. Galton, as a late-comer to the scene, experienced that rift's aftermath in 'the pain of spiritual loss so characteristic of the century'.[18] He renounced his inherited Anglicanism for Roman Catholicism only to repudiate that conversion at the time he met Matthew Arnold who, like his late father Dr. Arnold of Rugby School, was staunchly anti-Tractarian. Coincidently Galton's case paralleled that of Matthew's brother Thomas whose vacillations went even further than Galton's to an additional final reconversion to the Roman Catholic faith.

The Tractarian dispute produced two climaxes. As well as the early ecclesiastical climax of John Henry Newman's defection to the Roman Catholic Church with several followers, there came the later literary climax. In 1888 Thomas Arnold's daughter, Mary Augusta (Mrs Humphry Ward), published her astonishingly successful 'thesis' novel *Robert Elsmere.* The novel's eponymous hero is an Anglican priest who finds Church dogma unacceptable, renounces his ordination vows, establishes a Christian mission in London's East End, but dies before he can resolve his religious scruples. Several of Oxford's leading participants in the Tractarian controversy have been identified with characters in the work, their opinions along with sentiments expressed by Matthew Arnold in his essays on religion being absorbed into the plot.

Subsequent to Arthur Galton's initial contact with Matthew Arnold he consolidated his intimacy with the Arnolds by visiting them regularly at their Lake District holiday home Fox How before, and after, Matthew's death. Although no confirmation comes to hand, it is inconceivable that he would be

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[18] William S. Peterson, *Victorian Heretic: Mrs Humphry Ward's 'Robert Elsmere'*, (New Jersey: Leicester University Press, 1976), p.11.

unaware of Mrs Ward and her monumental work, or that he would not have discussed her with Manning in the light of his strongly felt religious views and his passionate cause to honour Matthew Arnold's memory. Consequently through him, Frederic would have gained a thorough grounding in the broils of probably the most prolonged and bitter attack on Christian doctrine in modern times.

Through Galton's tuition, Manning also acquired a scholarly regard for French literature and philosophy. His reading ranged widely in these fields, as is made apparent in Chapter 3, through the discussion there of reviews he contributed to *The Spectator* and of articles in other journals. That range commences with the writers of the Provençal school and, continuing unbroken, concludes with his contempories such as Ernest Renan, Anatole France and Henri Bergson, the last of whom significantly influenced Manning's thinking, as will be shown in the Conclusion.

The association between Galton and Manning as master and pupil continued in England for two years, during which time Frederic's movements are less clear - in Coleman's words, 'Manning's whereabouts in these early years in England are not well documented.'[19] It is known they visited Italy together in 1899 and that Galton delegated some of his responsibility for his young charge to a Buckinghamshire clergyman who unsuccessfully coached him for matriculation into New College, Oxford. Some of the Galton literary connections he met during those years were Bernard Berenson, Laurence Binyon and Max Beerbohm, whose company to London's West End theatres might well have initiated Frederic's later feeling for dramatic form. Despite the value, however intangible, of those excursions aimed at encouraging a literary mind, Frederic's teenage life, drifting toward that of a dilettante with no clear

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[19] Coleman, p.43.

career prospects, seems to have aroused concern in the more pragmatic minds of his parents back home in Australia. Following a visit by Sir William and Lady Manning, Frederic returned to Sydney with them in September 1900.

Back in Australia they found that their young son could not settle into business or even, at the very least, a writing career which they might have condoned. His earliest known published piece is of that time, a review of *Hedda Gabler* written as theatre critic for a local newspaper shortly after arrival,[20] probably while still basking in the afterglow of the West End bright lights.

To him Sydney remained provincial and crude. Its limitations, previously inhibiting, were now stifling, especially after the exhilaration of his recent brief but promising interaction with some of London's wittiest and most accomplished literati. Significantly too, Manning's generation, of which he was typical in this regard, was early and energetic among Australia's ambitious and forthright youth in looking to Europe for its intellectual development.[21] An essayist dealing with the growth of early Australian artistic expression states:

> Even the dream of an art that would interpret the life of the country to its people was, to an extent, stultified by a lack of responsiveness in the community and by a steady migration of both artists and writers to old world centres where they were often submerged.[22]

By late 1903 Manning was back in England, supported by a small stipend from his father, lodging with Arthur Galton at the vicarage in Edenham, Lincolnshire, where he remained almost continuously - one major interruption being his active service with the British army during World War I - until

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20 'Ibsen', *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 3 November 1900, p.11.

21 Chris Wallace-Crabbe (ed.), *The Australian Nationalists: Modern Critical Essays*, covers a full discussion of the standing of the arts, particularly writing and painting, in Australia during the years leading up to and immediately following Federation.

22 Wallace-Crabbe (Ed.), Vance Palmer's, 'The Legend', p.5.

Galton's death in 1921. His three years' stay in Australia was to prove much longer than any subsequent sojourns.

Together again, Arthur Galton and Frederic Manning shared a scholarly, frugal and moody existence, keeping somewhat at arm's length from their acquaintances. With Galton's library[23] and its keeper readily accessible, Manning's reading and study continued apace. He wrote poetry which he included in letters to his friends and which from 1904 he began publishing in journals along with prose articles. Whenever he did leave the vicarage he liked mostly to stay in London with the Shakespears or with their friend Eva Fowler, whom he grew to regard highly. Eva Fowler was a Californian of Prussian-Mexican parentage, married to a wealthy Welsh manufacturer of steam ploughs, who used her leisured situation to foster the ambitions of young literary hopefuls. Although less than a dozen years older than Frederic, she was old enough, in his mind, for him to refer to her as 'beloved aunt', but young enough, in her mind, to be susceptible to 'the artistic temperament in men.'[24]

One visitor welcome at Edenham was Albert Houtin (1867-1926), a French cleric trained by the Benedictines but later a dissenter holding *avant-garde* views on Church dogma and traditions. Galton invited him to the vicarage on the strength of their similar attitudes to theology, expressed by them in a range of publications they had previously exchanged. Manning and Houtin quickly developed a firm friendship which endured until Houtin's death. That friendship was based on a shared literary taste, the full impact of which on Manning's writing will become apparent in Chapter 3. Manning later demonstrated his regard for Houtin in *The Criterion*, through his articles

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[23] Marwil, p.212, [After Galton's death] 'seven tons of [his] books [...] went to London for auction.'

[24] Coleman, p.65.

there on several of Houtin's publications.[25]

Another friend important to him was James Griffyth Fairfax (1886-1976), born into the publishing dynasty prominent in Australia. They might have known of each other through family interaction in Sydney, but their English friendship resulted from mutual contact with Olivia Shakespear and Eva Fowler. Fairfax and Manning visited each other and corresponded often in the years 1907-14 during part of which time Fairfax was an undergraduate at Oxford. His importance lay in the youthful (if rather staid) element he introduced into Manning's sheltered life at Edenham under the ageing and cantankerous Galton,[26] together with his use as a sympathetic ear for Manning's opinions and hopes. Much of Manning's half of their correspondence survives[27] as a valuable source of information for those years.

Emanating from that strongly studious background and following his success with *Scenes and Portraits* he published *Poems* in 1910. Again the critics praised his competence, but with reservations. They missed from that new work an expansion of the irony they expected after *Scenes and Portraits*, seeing the poetry mostly as a collective pale reflection of 1890s aestheticism. The volume's two long poems, 'Theseus and Hippolyta' and 'Helgi of Lithend', written in the lively narrative form of *The Vigil of Brunhild* drew scant attention, thus overlooking the point that narrative was Manning's favoured vehicle for irony. However *Poems* as a whole drew further praise for its author. From *The Spectator* of 30 July 1910 came -'Manning's slim sheaf of *Poems* is not to be lightly passed over. He has two qualities

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[25] Refer Appendix III. Their correspondence is held in the Department of Manuscripts, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

[26] Pound and Litz (eds.), p.119, No.93 - Dorothy Shakespear to Ezra Pound, 21 June, 1912 - Every one is wild about this blooming Lloyd George's Insurance Act ... Mat-Mat [Rev. Arthur Galton] is going to live without servants as he *won't* be Ll.G's tax-gatherer - & poor Fred [Frederic Manning] - is to be away a while - then I suppose he'll be inadequate housemaid at Edenham [The Rectory].

[27] James Griffyth Fairfax collection, National Library of Australia, Canberra, MS 1750.

not often found together, a wide range and a fastidious scholarship'. A fuller criticism from another source observed,

> the writer is manifestly a true poet, an authentic voice, and quite as much a master of poetic technique as he is capable of expressing himself in poetic diction. His work is decidedly fresh and even original up to a point. Where he derives he does so from more than one source of inspiration [...] Mr Manning's works is [*sic*] full of suggestion and spirit. He has too, an easy command of language. But to appreciate him as he deserves to be appreciated he must be read apart from isolated fragments, as all poets must. Then the fine flavour of his imaginative gift will constantly disclose itself despite a certain veil of wilful cleverness to which he occasionally resorts.[28]

The *TLS* of 23 June 1910 reviewed *Poems* in a mood more expansive than previously:

> we may say at once that after reading [Manning's] poems we expect a good deal. Imitative as they are upon the surface, full of glimpses of Meredith and Swinburne and Tennyson, it is quite unmistakeable that beneath the surface they are very much alive and not imitative at all. They express in well-known language a mind which is obviously full of things to say on its own account and not in the least inclined to rely upon a second-hand inspiration. It is a mind which seems to have what Bagehot called the "experiencing" gift, the power of absorbing and retaining sensations.[...] A writer who can use the device of the "dotted note" as skilfully as in this little poem ['Serenade'], with its broken beat and lingering hesitations, has not much to learn about lyrical form. But it is the effect given by the whole volume, of constant pressure from within of a highly responsive imagination, rather than any single poem, which seems to us the significant feature of Mr. Manning's work.

The 'glimpses of Meredith, Swinburne and Tennyson' referred to are open to challenge. In particular with regard to Meredith and even more so to Swinburne, the true attitude of Manning to them would indicate little such influence. Chapter 3 details, through the analysis of his critical reviewing for *The Spectator*, the extent of his regard for those poets. But against the praise directed in the remainder of that *TLS* article should be placed Walter de la Mare's more chastened estimate that,

> The volume does not, we think, as a whole prove the possession of quite so vivid and rich a gift for verse as was evident in the author's "Scenes and Portraits" for prose. Irony, wit, an unusually wide erudition -all conspicuous features of Mr. Manning's imaginative prose studies - would be

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[28] The Mitchell Library, Manning papers, unidentified press cutting.

> of course rather dangerous encumbrances in poetry.[...] for the most part they are graceful, lightly poised lyrics which (and in particular those in the series "Les heures isolées") in their rhythm and metrical form follow French rather than English models. The best of these float so airily and seem so immaterial that even the beauty they call up is apt to be lost in delight of their delicacy and finish.[29]

Heartened by the critical opinion in his favour, Manning energetically entered the next phase of his career. He proposed writing a major work planned to establish his reputation. For that he chose to write an historical romance, provisionally called *The Golden Coach*[30], set in seventeenth century France and the Papal Court of Rome, its theme continuing his by then absorbing enquiry into church politics and dogma. He began to work on it steadily and productively while writing poetry and contributing review articles to *The Spectator* then under the editorship of John St Loe Strachey. His reviewing for *The Spectator* increased, totalling thirty-one articles for the years 1911-12, providing an important supplement to his income. Among his friends he became known as 'Manning of *The Spectator*'. However at that apex of activity his momentum suddenly dropped away, for several reasons.

The susceptibility to respiratory infection which had spoiled his childhood continued to dog him through adult life. His comparative failure to gain public poetic recognition and mounting difficulty with *The Golden Coach*, as well as the demanding Galton's growing sense of disappointment in him, possibly coupled with Galton's awareness of early signs of a drinking problem in his protégé (shades of Lionel Johnson), all undermined Manning's confidence. His low spirits at that time were reflected in a virulent letter

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29 Walter de le Mare, 'Recent Poetry', *The Bookman*, Vol.38, No.228, September, 1910, p.258.

30 Also known as *The Gilded Coach*. Peter Davies, Manning's last publisher, said Manning always called this work *The Golden Coach*. Reference, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, Manning papers MSS 2594/2.

to Fairfax who was about to leave for Australia:

> By the time you think of returning Europe will be a red, wet mess of bloody slaughter; and I have visions of myself trailing a puissant pike, in Pistol's phrase spilling my blood, what little I've got, for my country and being compensated for it by, what would be the supreme satisfaction of my life: sticking a knife into the guts of a gor-bellied German until the fat closed round the haft [echoing Galton's bellicose anti-German obsession]. I really hate European democracy, and think, that, as it is impossible for us to teach the masses to despise and slaughter themselves, they should be incited to despise and slaughter each other. So you see I scent carnage from afar like an exultant vulture.[31]

Manning's percipient observations on an anticipated European conflict, and his relish for it, reinforce the well argued points made by the historian Roland N. Stromberg when reconstructing those times:

> The enthusiastic approval accorded by almost all intellectuals of all sorts to the war of 1914 seems to be one of history's better kept secrets these days. It is certainly well known, but seldom mentioned, for it is felt to be a scandal. There is a tendency, sometimes, to pretend that only a few foolish poets like Rupert Brooke, or naive scholars seduced into government service, endorsed the holocaust. But of course this is not so. [...] The relatively few who held out against the war spirit turn out in most cases to have been something less than intrepid in 1914 (as distinct from later; we have to distinguish sharply between the mood of August 1914, and that of 1917 or 1918). [...] In citing the pro-war intellectuals, we are not talking about reluctant or forced compliance, which was generally the mood of 1939, but about enthusiastic, even ecstatic welcoming of the war as regeneration, redemption, salvation, or some sort of positive value.[32]

The close resemblance between Manning's contemporary feelings and Stromberg's researched findings of that period have another dimension. Manning's call to incite humanity against itself *en masse* carries strong Nietzschean associations, for it was Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) who predicted in 1880:

> For long now our entire European culture has been moving, with a tormenting tension that grows greater from decade to decade, as if towards a catastrophe: restless, violent, precipitate,

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[31] Fairfax collection, No.106, 22 October 1912.

[32] Roland N. Stromberg, 'The Intellectuals and the Coming of War', *Journal of European Studies*, No.3, 1973, pp.109-22.

like a river that wants to reach its end.[33]

Furthermore, drawing Manning's and Nietzsche's thoughts even closer together, Stromberg points out that, 'Unhappy sensitives had listened to the restless prophecies of Nietzsche' in which 'Nietzsche [...] impatient with man as he existed, had spread the idea that it might not be a bad thing to cull the species ruthlessly.' Just how strongly, if at all, the German philosopher directly influenced Manning is a question to be addressed.

In March 1913, Manning made a brave attempt to revive his flagging fortunes by leaving Edenham to take up residence in Paris. To help him in that resolve he sought the assistance of Albert Houtin. Setting out eagerly, after a light-hearted farewell party given by Dorothy Shakespear, which included among several other guests Charles Whibley, whom Manning esteemed highly, his Paris adventure quickly degenerated into a series of unlucky mishaps. Disheartened, he returned to Edenham within a few days, reconciled to remaining with Galton thereafter. The experience demonstrated the extent to which Manning had come to rely on Galton's monastic régime, sheltered from the stress of social checks since early adolescence, immured in a quiet Lincolshire village way of life, punctuated only by the regular postal delivery, Galton's immoderate sermons from the pulpit every Sunday and occasional forewarned visits from literary minded cronies. There were undemanding enjoyable interludes such as holidays at friends' country homes, brief excursions to London, and the hospitality of the old-world brothers Shadwell at Oriel College, Oxford, (Charles Shadwell being its Provost, a former pupil and later literary executor of Walter Pater) about which Manning observed:

I seem to have travelled from Paddington into the 18th century.

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[33] Attributed by Stromberg to Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* - perhaps another version of Aphorism 477, 'such a highly cultivated, and therefore necessarily weary humanity as that of present-day Europe, needs not only wars but the greatest and most terrible wars (this is, occasional relapses into barbarism) in order not to forfeit to the means of culture its culture and its very existence.'

> Courtesy, and queer temperamental oddities, and a kind of old-maidenliness, is the atmosphere. It amuses me, but what the devil am I doing here![34]

That muted exclamation vibrates with suddenly unleashed deep-seated resentment against expectations long thwarted. This was vicarage life on a near-Brontëan scale.

In that period of depression Manning struggled to keep his name known, helped by Ezra Pound who remained convinced of his friend's ability. Pound successfully promoted the publication of Manning's verse in Harriet Monroe's magazine *Poetry* and later sought to interest other American publishers in the early chapters of *The Golden Coach.*[35] Also at about that time Manning met, and formed a friendship with, Richard Aldington (1892-1962), which led to collaborative work between them. The three writers discussed plans for the publication of their own magazine, provisionally entitled *The Hellenist*, intended to subvert the Georgian poets' growing influence while striking a balance with Wyndham Lewis's confrontational style soon to be broadcast in *Blast*. As may be expected of three such partners, forthright individuals but committed here to one voice in business matters, they disagreed over details and the project collapsed. Later Pound sought Manning's support in a scheme to take over the journal *Academy*, but after protracted negotiations between them that also fell through. In any case Dorothy Shakespear believed, 'Surely there are enough magazines going, mostly useless?'[36] By the time the political events of 1914 overtook them, all three were preoccupied with other concerns.

One further acquaintance important to Manning was Sir William

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[34] Fairfax collection, No.87, 11 October 1910.

[35] Paige, Letter No.167, p.219, ? August 1920, to T E Lawrence, 'I have already sent over to N.Y. one hundred delicious pages of Manning, which I hope will in due course be printed.'

[36] Omar Pound and A Walton Litz (Eds.), Letter No.232, dated 21 March, 1914, p.333.

Rothenstein (1872-1945), noted portraitist of the rich and famous. They first met in Manning's youth when he commissioned Rothenstein to draw his portrait in pastels but took fright at his presumption and failed to collect the finished work. They met again, by chance, years after when Manning recalled that first encounter but Rothenstein could not. Ensuing embarrassment, from Manning's umbrage, was defused by the quick thinking of others present, and from that unpromising start there gradually developed probably Manning's most significant friendship, lasting the remainder of his life. Manning's correspondence with Rothenstein affords a valuable insight into his wartime and later experiences.[37]

A light-hearted episode bordering on the bizarre, and unusual in Manning's experience, took place in January 1914 when, together with Pound and W.B. Yeats, he helped plan a celebratory dinner honouring Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, at the latter's Sussex home. Known as the 'peacock dinner' (the main course being roasted peacock) the gathering, in its concentration of literary figures significant in their time, resembled the December 1817 gathering of Romantics at their 'immortal dinner'. Its difference lay in a motivation more political than social.[38] Present at the meal with Pound and Yeats were Aldington, F.S. Flint, T. Sturge Moore, and Victor Plarr. Hilaire Belloc arrived later while Robert Bridges, the Poet Laureate, declined to attend at all, for reasons of political caution. John Masefield and Manning both sent last minute apologies for their absence. Manning pleaded his ever useful stand-by, ill health, but the more likely reason was Galton's disapproval, as Blunt's record of outspoken opposition to English imperialism in India, Egypt, Ireland and during the South African War, had made him thoroughly unpopular with the Establishment. Although Manning's absence deprived him

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[37] The Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Rothenstein collection, bms Eng 1148 (970).

[38] William T. Going, 'A Peacock Dinner: The Homage of Pound and Yeats to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt', *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol.1, No.3, March 1971, pp.303-10.

of camaraderie with some of the driving intellects of his day, he might have felt compensated by the further self-effacement this act yielded him. Afterwards Yeats, urged by Lady Gregory, reported the occasion in *The Times*.[39] The participants then 'encountered some odium' among which the chaps at the Foreign Office vowed they would 'never speak to any of those poets again.'[40]

Frederic Manning was thirty-two when war was declared in August 1914. One might have expected that his age, coupled with a chronically weak constitution, would have been sufficient reason to excuse him from military service. But such was not his view or the actual case. A protracted interest in aviation - in his youth he had known Lawrence Hargrave (1850-1915) an Australian pioneer aviator contemporary with the Wright brothers,[41] and in England he had enjoyed being taken 'aeroplaning' - prompted him to apply unsuccessfully for a commission in the Royal Flying Corps. Similar approaches to other fighting units were also rejected until finally, in October 1915, he enlisted in the King's Shropshire Regiment as, of all things, an infantry private.[42] Aldington advised his friend John Cournos against such a course of action:

> don't, *don't* let yourself be shoved into this. [...] With your sensitiveness & physique you could never stand the heavy marching in full marching order. I often wonder how Manning has stood it. You know I am pretty strong, yet I often feel ready to drop down & I can see from the faces of the others that they are too.[43]

Manning shared with T.E. Lawrence, his acquaintance of later years, that act, the self-defiant sacrifice, perhaps vanity, of submerging his identity in

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39 *The Times*, 20 January 1914, p.5.

40 Edith Finch, *Wilfrid Scawen Blunt 1840-1922*, pp.336-38.

41 Carl Kaeppel, 'Frederic Manning, Soldier, Scholar, Artist', *Australian Quarterly*, June 1935, p.48.

42 Marwil gives a scrupulously researched account of Manning's military service, pp.157-93.

43 Norman T. Gates (Ed.), *Richard Aldington: An Autobiography in Letters*. Letter No.11, 14 August 1916, pp.21-22.

physical exertion among companions of inferior education and social standing, an escape probably easier then for the educated few to exploit. The withdrawal by each of them into this environment, releasing them from intellectual responsibility, indulged that part of their personalities which craved privacy. This note-worthy similarity between them prompts interest in constructing a psychological model common to them both.

Within six weeks of commencing training, and on the persistent urging of his battalion officers, Manning applied for a commission. In April 1916 he was sent to an Officers' Cadet Battalion at Oxford for appropriate retraining. As Marwil found at the British Army Records Centre, Manning's officer nomination was cancelled for disciplinary reasons:

> 13.6.1916 Bringing alcoholic liquor into college, contrary to Battn. Order 12. Drunk. Admonished. Returned to unit 14.6.16.

Back with his regiment, he embarked in August 1916 for France where on arrival his regiment was immediately directed to the fighting on the Somme and Ancre front. His experiences in that battle and the events leading up to it formed the basis for his acclaimed novel *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, written and published in 1929.

Although Manning did not distinguish himself in the Somme slaughter, he must have impressed his superiors as they again recommended him for officer training. Posted back to England in December 1916, to Whittington Barracks, Lichfield, for further retraining, his next attempt proved markedly better. In May 1917 he was commissioned second lieutenant and in July joined the Royal Irish Regiment stationed near Dublin. As will be shown, that promotion and posting turned out to be a mistake for Manning, leading to the termination of his military service. In the meantime his literary development had continued.

Earlier, during his wartime years Manning wrote more poetry. At first he followed in the vein of his previous 'Sapphic ecstasies'[44] but as his army experiences grew, in particular of trench warfare, his response embodied the urgent, tenacious questioning characteristic of Modernity. Possibly influenced by the success of his friend Binyon, he collected those poems with others, some of which had been earlier published individually, into a new anthology. This because of his continuing army duties, required help from Eva Fowler and Galton to expedite its printing. The volume, entitled *Eidola*, was published in April 1917.

Because the collection combined several of his pre-war poems with poetry written while on active service in France, reviewers had difficulty in reconciling the consequent stark contrasts in theme and style, and thus praise was mixed. The *TLS* of 5 April 1917 was typical of the lukewarm response:

> Those who based high expectations on Mr Manning's volume of poems in 1910 will be a little disappointed with what they find here. There are one or two lighter lyrics, not often above, though never below, the level of competent craftsmen; but for the most part the book is made up of gaunt little poems of war seeking to give by plain hard enumeration of horrors the sense of horror that the author has felt. Sincere though they all are, they do not reinforce what is actually said by anything implied. But that they are the work of an unusual and strong mind is clear [...].

Other more favourable comment on *Eidola* helped sales of the book exceed those of his earlier works, particularly in the USA, but they were still modest. Richard Aldington praised the book highly, welcoming Manning with open arms into the fold of Modernity. In his estimate the war poems were 'stern and true yet beautiful' and he gave a 'whoop of joy that so delicate a scholar and so sincere a poet has been converted to *vers libre*'.[45] As it turned out the welcome was premature.

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[44] Marwil - an assessment attributed to C.E. Lawrence, an editor for the firm of John Murray, p.172.

[45] Richard Aldington, 'Poetry from the Trenches', *Dial*, Vol.62, 17 May 1917, pp.426-47.

But elevation from the ranks brought stress for Manning. Soon after his entry into the Royal Irish Regiment officers' mess he ran into trouble. He found the company there uncongenial, took to drinking heavily and was severely reprimanded. After a short period of hospitalisation he again succumbed to drink leading to his request to resign his commission on health grounds rather than face the resulting serious disciplinary consequences. This was granted and he was discharged from military service in February 1918. He remained in Dublin until October of that year as a guest in the home of Sir John Lynch, an eminent solicitor. The compassion shown Manning by the Lynch family and their friends eased him through his despair to improved health.

As his strength and interests returned so did his attitude to Ireland change. Although his mother and all of his grandparents were Irish, Manning previously had indicated as much indifference to that country as he had to his native Australia, apart from an article in support of the Unionist cause, written from Edenham years before. Now, on location and better able to judge circumstances for himself in their domestic setting, he talked with intellectuals like George William Russell (AE) and Stephen Gwynne, and developed an understanding of, and a liking for, what he took to be the Irish temperament, to the extent that he repudiated Unionism in favour of Nationalism. He published his carefully reasoned justification in March 1919.[46]

Manning did not return to Edenham immediately after his rehabilitation in Dublin, but shared a flat in London with his mother and sisters who were on an extended visit from Sydney. His father had died in April 1915. Following the Armistice came the general need to pick up the threads of

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[46] Manning, 'An Unionist's *Apologia*', *Nation*, 29 March 1919, pp.773-74.

peacetime life. Pound's letter of January 28, 1919 to William Carlos Williams included news of Manning among the usual badinage they exchanged:

> My Dear Old Sawbukk von Grump:
> How are your adenoids? Am rejoicing in vacancy; prose collection "finished" committed to the gaping maw of the post office; am freed of its weight. Haven't heard from you since the pig died. [...] Manning again in circulation.
> All sorts of "projects" artoliteresque in the peaceconferentialbolshevikair. Switzerland bursting into Dadaique manifestos re/ the nothingness of the all.[47]

As editor of *The Little Review*, he quickly secured Manning's services in writing an article on Rémy de Gourmont.[48] Then Manning suffered another setback. Probably just when he was anticipating a quiet spell of reading and research preparatory to re-engaging with *The Golden Coach*, his life-long respiratory weakness, leading to asthma, chronic bronchitis and emphysema, made him an easy victim of the influenza epidemic then raging. The infection developed into double pneumonia with almost fatal results. After spending several weeks in a London nursing home he was transferred to a Norfolk sanatorium, from April to June 1919, under the observation of three physicians concerned that his condition had deteriorated into tuberculosis. However, their tests showed negative and on his release Manning returned to the only home-life he knew, his residence with Arthur Galton.

After *Eidola*, Manning concentrated on prose. His protracted illness and convalescence prevented him from fulfilling, beyond the compilation of some preliminary notes, an engagement to help write the official biography of Lord Kitchener. But another chance to try his hand at the genre presented itself through connections with Galton, when the widow of Sir William White (the former head of naval construction at the Admiralty for many years) authorised Manning to write her late husband's biography. As lack of ready

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[47] Hugh Witemeyer (Ed.), *Pound/Williams: Selected Letters of Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams*, (New York: New Directions, 1996), pp.34-35.

[48] Manning, 'M. de Gourmont and the Problem of Beauty', *The Little Review*, February/March 1919, pp.19-26.

money was always a concern to Manning, his acceptance very probably was motivated by the promised fee and the expected royalties. Work on the project progressed slowly while he contributed an article on Binyon to the *Piccadilly Review*, a couple more articles to *The Spectator*, one of them rather irritable, on Lionel Johnson,[49] and three untitled fables to the magazine *Coterie* submitted at the instigation of its editor, Richard Aldington. Pound also pressed him for more of *The Golden Coach* to present to an American publisher who expressed alacrity to accept the romance, but in its completed form only. Manning seemed to be getting into his stride when fate struck again.

Arthur Galton died in February 1921 after a short illness. Galton had been many things to Manning, his surrogate father, tutor, guardian, companion, conscience. To Albert Houtin Manning confided, 'I feel as though a part of my own mind were dead. We were so closely bound together, in our affections, in our ideals and beliefs, spiritually and intellectually, that now I cannot realize his absence.'[50] Then, within five months Eva Fowler died suddenly, leaving him bereft of 'the most loyal and generous friend a man could have.'[51] Thus Manning was rendered homeless and lonely. Moreover the painful reality made clear to him by the combined effects of those two great personal losses was the fragility of his English connection, based on their friendship and sponsorship.[52] Once deprived of his only soul mates, he soon regressed deeper into his burdensome innate privacy, disconsolate with those he lived among, adapting himself in part to the curse of Ishmael

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[49] Marwil, 'Did Manning fear that after a "golden prime" - Galton's judgment on Johnson's early years - he, like Johnson, had been wasting his talent? And was his silence on Johnson's most notorious means of escape, alcohol, a product of his own embarrassment? [...] Certainly Manning's strictures on Johnson were come by sincerely [...] but they may also have served to exorcise a spectre that his own unhappy letters do not speak of.' p.205.

[50] Marwil - from Manning's letter to Houtin, 2 March 1921, p.211.

[51] Marwil, p.216.

[52] Marwil - from Manning's letter to Houtin, 12 August 1921, 'There is little to keep me in England now, and I am of those who have no country.' p.217.

which he chose to share.[53]

For a while Manning stayed on at the vicarage, before moving into lodgings in the village. He managed to settle himself to writing an article, 'Poetry and Prose' for *The Chapbook*, forming a trilogy with other articles by Aldington and T.S. Eliot. Otherwise, he became bogged down, and appealed to Aldington for help with the White biography. Aldington agreed, but their ensuing alliance soon soured and they parted company in acrimony, never to be reconciled, the rift caused by a misunderstanding over payments, both men being in straitened circumstances then. Both were also men of integrity and the argument might have been a convenient cover, by at least one of them, for an *impasse* reached in the collaboration. Contemporaneous with their own collaboration there was an analogous arrangement between Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford which also failed. Similarities between the two partnerships, as ill-matched pairs, suggest further reasons for the break between Manning and Aldington, for while Manning and Conrad were painstaking, hesitant, introvert and troubled writers, Aldington and Ford were hasty, confident, extravert and flamboyant, conflicting factors all conducive to an explosive mixture.

Yet as Manning lost one *confrère* so he gained another. His firm friend Rothenstein introduced him to T.E. Lawrence. Those two literary soldiers, with sharply contrasting service records, struck an immediate rapport. Manning was known even to out-talk his articulate new acquaintance.[54] Meanwhile his work was interrupted by further, seemingly inevitable, bouts of ill health eliciting his doctor's orders to rest completely. In November 1922 he holidayed in Rome, a city he liked and often revisited with thoughts

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[53] Genesis, xvi.12, 'and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.'

[54] Marwil, pp.220-21.

of settling there, and broke his return journey to stay in Paris with the Pounds, who had married in 1914 and from 1920 had begun their long fraternisation with continental Europe. Manning also sought out Albert Houtin. They re-affirmed their close ties in an affectionate reunion. While with the Pounds he met James Joyce but did not develop a relationship with him.

Back in England a change from the Edenham environment seemed necessary for Manning's welfare. His solution was to purchase a farmhouse near Chobham in Surrey. Funds to purchase the farmhouse came from the balance of Galton's legacy remaining to Manning after much of the estate had been frittered away in legal costs arising from Galton's sister's contesting the will. There Manning laboriously completed writing *The Life of Sir William White*, its publication in 1923 by John Murray being his last assignment with that firm. Although biography was not Manning's forte, he overcame his limitations to labour through the task to its completion. The book sold well enough to satisfy the deceased subject's connections. As a literal daily business record of a dedicated and noted naval architect and civil servant, the weighty volume is successful, providing a rich field for enquiry into contracts, specifications and political manoeuvring, but the man and his family are seldom evident. One of Manning's own biographers[55] located an astute reviewer of *The Life of Sir William White* who found irony in the book's apparent artlessness:

> It is on the whole a melancholy tale, one which makes one suddenly realise that the progress of civilisation is not as simple, as one might think, but tortuous, full of mystery and menace.[56]

There stands a statement that strikes right through to the core of Manning's psyche. In its severe wording the criticism very probably unwittingly

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[55] Coleman, p.147.

[56] *Isis: International Review* (Brussels), Vol.6, 1924, p.423.

identifies the irony which the 'melancholy tale' represents in Manning himself, that of an otherwise experienced but struggling writer anxious to avoid failure in an unfamiliar genre.

Work on the biography had meant added diversion from regular reviewing in the period, between his last article for *The Spectator* in April 1920 and his next sequence, with *The Criterion*, for T.S. Eliot, begun in July 1924. Over the next four years Manning contributed eight articles to *The Criterion*, three of them devoted to reviewing religious treatises by Albert Houtin. In 1924 his longest piece of critical writing appeared in another journal,[57] while that year he suffered more illness, from influenza and an appendectomy, a nasty combination as the former hampered recovery from the latter. Then he was shaken by another unexpected death, that of his youngest sister while she was in Paris. Lady Manning and her other two daughters, all in Europe at the time, accompanied by Frederic, returned to Australia in November 1924 for the interment. An absence of twenty-one years from the country of his birth did not kindle in Manning any new patriotic feeling and by May the following year he was back in England, having left behind him little evidence of his visit.

Back in his Surrey farmhouse again, he became a victim of lassitude for several months more. He eventually tired of the Spartan conditions there, sold out and revisited Dublin. The 1920s were mostly unhappy years for Manning. He never again found a replacement for the home Galton had shared with him. Whereas until then he had cultivated a preference for keeping his distance from other people, in the early post-war years that self-indulgence reacted against him. Several whose friendships he valued either died suddenly or became estranged for various reasons. His withdrawal into

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[57] Manning, 'Critic and Aesthetic', *The Quarterly Review*, Vol.242, No.480, July 1924, pp.123-44.

isolation when circumstances had suited him thus changed from a luxury into a painfully normal situation which he found intolerable as his small world closed in on him. Difficulties were increased by financial insecurity and his continued poor health, aggravated by heavy smoking and drinking. It seems that, although he spent most of his life clear of Australian influences, his difficulties sprang from family tendencies. As Marwil observes, 'despite the comfort and opportunity in which the Manning children were raised, several of their lives were disfigured by loneliness and alcohol.'[58] Not surprisingly then, in his present distress he remembered Ireland and the kindness he had found there earlier under similar circumstances. Returning to Dublin Manning renewed contact with AE and with W.B. Yeats whose new sedateness disappointed - 'no man is a prophet in his own country, and least of all a senator.'[59] He gratified his liking for dramatics by attending the Abbey Theatre première of Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* a couple of nights before its performance provoked a riot by Nationalists. In a letter to Eliot he called the play an 'extraordinary tour de force' and 'the central fact of my experience here.'[60] But drawn ever closer to his mother by the debilitating progression of reversals in his life - Albert Houtin's death in 1926 further saddened him - he anxiously awaited her return to London and left Ireland to join her there.

Lady Manning and her daughters spent most of their time in Europe during the 1920s, with London as their base. Occasionally they were accompanied by one or two of Frederic's brothers, or Frederic himself, on visits to France, Italy and Austria. Frederic became an authority on the attractions of Rome in particular, stemming from his early introduction to

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[58] Marwil, p.18.

[59] Rothenstein collection, 5 January 1926.

[60] Marwil - from a letter by Manning to T.S. Eliot. p.241.

that city by Galton and enhanced by his familiarity with the outstanding collection of Piranesi etchings once owned by Galton.

In London he wrote one of those tantalising gems of scholarship which he displayed just often enough to remind the erudite of the resources from which he could draw. That latest piece was his 'Introductory Essay' to a new limited deluxe edition of Walter Charleton's *Epicurus's Morals*, first published in 1655, and republished by Peter Davies, a youthful, innovative, sensitive newcomer to the trade. The book, along with Manning's commentary, was well received, although its specialised appeal and consequently small circulation did nothing to increase his recognition. A quibble by R.G. Collingwood in his critique for Eliot's short lived *The Monthly Criterion* brought a rather sharp rejoinder from Manning who, perhaps coincidently, wrote nothing further for Eliot, although the two remained on friendly terms.[61]

Manning was in Dublin again in 1928. There he relapsed into his drinking from which the Lynch family once more rescued him. On recovery he returned to Lincolnshire, not to Edenham there but to the nearby village of Bourne to take up lodgings in 'The Bull', a family and commercial hotel, where Peter Davies sought him out and persuaded him to agree to an earlier request to write down his war experiences - as a memoir, Davies tactfully suggested. Almost immediately Manning found himself writing fluently, his composition quickly shaping itself into a novel of major proportions. Davies realised the crucial need to maintain Manning's momentum and persuaded him to relocate in London, near himself, in order to encourage the flow and quickly transpose the manuscript, as it was written, into typescript before Manning could regress to his old hindrances of revise and discard.

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[61] R.G. Collingwood '*Epicurus: his Morals*', *The Monthly Criterion*, Vol.VI, No.4, October 1927, pp.369-70, and Frederic Manning, 'To the Editor', *The Monthly Criterion*, Vol.VII, No.1, January 1928, pp.61-62.

The finished novel, entitled *The Middle Parts of Fortune* (first publicly published as *Her Privates We*), was written in just over six months, a prodigious achievement for Manning, its authorial stance unusual for its subject in taking the viewpoint of the rank and file soldiers. The book caused an immediate popular sensation, fuelled by speculation rife over the identity of its author since Manning had suppressed his name from the title-page, substituting instead the pen-name 'Private 19022', his old army number. Because of the resulting public controversy, anonymity could not be preserved for long and within a couple of months of publication Manning's secret was known generally. However not until 1943 was an edition published acknowledging the author's name and not until 1977 was the book republished unexpurgated as *The Middle Parts of Fortune*.

The vast bulk of published criticism on Manning, and knowledge of him, is generated from his war novel which for a comparatively short time won enormous popularity and is still in print. Discussion about it is complicated by its name change. As one mark of the novel's veracity, the manuscript contained many of the coarse oaths and invectives typical of soldiery but unacceptable in print at the time of publication, necessitating an expurgated edition for general circulation. Firstly though, Manning's new publisher Peter Davies produced an unexpurgated limited edition late in 1929, bearing the original title *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, prior to the release in January 1930 of the modified version retitled *Her Privates We*. Several new editions of the book from 1943 under that new title, and since 1977 sometimes reinstating the original title and text, have contributed to the 'revival'[62] of interest in Manning which virtually ignores his other writing.

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[62] Stephen Murray-Smith, 'The Manning Revival', *Australian Book Review*, Vol.3, 1964, p.229.

T.E. Lawrence had been the first to identify and make known Manning's authorship, privately by telephone to Davies, forcing a confession from Davies through his argument that *Her Privates We* and *Scenes and Portraits*, a book he claimed to have read fifty times, had to be written by the same person.[63] During the 1920s Manning and Lawrence had kept up a desultory communication despite Manning's efforts to encourage more, but his new success, helped by Davies' mediation, brought them closer. Although Lawrence still remained a difficult man to pin down, he obviously held Manning in high esteem as shown from the evidence of his letters, and their mutual regard continued until 1935 when both men died within weeks of each other.

From the reading public, the critics and his fellow writers alike, Manning's war novel won him the acclaim[64] he had long sought but latterly must have concluded was beyond his grasp. Just as John Keats, in his own way fretful of Fame, could chide her coquetry:

> She is a Gypsey, will not speak to those
> Who have not learnt to be content without her;[65]

surely Manning too, contemplating life's ironies while a sudden celebrity in its spotlight, must have recognised and savoured her waywardness. Private even in his public triumph, Manning hurried off to Italy during the most hectic weeks of the book's reception, but on his return to England he showed signs of greater purpose in planning his future, encouraged, conceivably, by an unusual though temporary degree of financial independence.

While still basking in the triumph of *Her Privates We*, Manning quickly negotiated the release of *Scenes and Portraits* from John Murray and

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63 Malcolm Brown (Ed.), *The Letters of T.E. Lawrence*, (Oxford: OUP, 1991) pp.436-38.

64 Andrew Rutherford, *The Literature of War: Five Studies in Heroic Virtue*, '[...] a novel [*Her Privates We*] which must rank as one of the masterpieces of war literature in English, uniting art with authenticity, fictional sophistication with documentary and psychological realism, and imposing significant form on the large untidiness of life and death.' p.99.

65 John Keats, 'Sonnet On Fame' (1819).

transferred its publishing rights to Peter Davies. During the summer of 1930, while living in London, he worked at a revised and enlarged edition of that book, adding to it another essay, entitled 'Apologia Dei', dedicated to T.E. Shaw [Lawrence] for its re-publication in November. The result drew from E.M. Forster an eloquent response linking the two works:

> I read "Scenes and Portraits" twenty years ago, and one of the stories in it, "The King of Uruk", has never faded from my mind; perhaps it is the most exquisite short story of our century. And the other day I read "Her Privates We", thought it the best of our war novels, and now learn that the two books are written by the same man.
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> Is there any connection between them? At the first glance they seem so different. One is so luscious and suave, the other all roughness and horror. One is a dream, the other reality. One leads us among philosophers and kings, the other among common soldiers who are covered with mud and vermin and fight rats and pilfer stores, and use unprintable words and die of unmentionable wounds, and are not even heroic according to civilian notions.
>
> Yet there is a connection. Both books are the work of a man who has found the world a place of pain, but who believes that, owing to pain, love comes into being.[...] "The King of Uruk" takes us into a world of movement and poetry.[...] It is a perfect story, perfectly told.[...] it substitutes compassion for tolerance. Mr. Manning, when he has seen the cruelty and evil of existence, is never tempted to withdraw and contemplate. His sympathy is active and that is why it has become an armour for him, and allowed him to endure the Great War and to write down afterwards the revelation the war gave him.[66]

In London Eliot, full of praise for *Her Privates We*, approached Manning with separate proposals to write for Faber & Faber and to translate a German war book, both of which he declined. Instead, after another holiday in Rome he re-settled in Bourne, at 'The Bull', his intention being to grapple yet again with *The Golden Coach*. And yet again the romance defied resolution. Early in 1931 he was back in London hopeful that the location associated with his recent success would help his concentration, but there he fell a victim to his persistent bronchial trouble and left to spend the summer recuperating in St. Moritz. Somewhat restored in health he returned to 'The Bull' and

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[66] *Daily Telegraph*, 16 December, 1930, E.M. Forster, 'A Master of Irony: Mr. Manning's Early Work'.

work on *The Golden Coach* but, as before, the inspiration he so dearly sought obstinately eluded him while he was distressed by news of Charles Whibley's death which reduced his list of confidants still further. A temporary respite from illness ended early in 1932 with another serious bout of double pneumonia. The train of events had developed a circular pattern which began to look ominous.

Even so, at Bourne again, released from hospital, Manning directed his literary thoughts to fresh fields. He contemplated writing a novel about English village life,[67] a subject, through length of residence, he was eminently qualified to attempt. Included in letters he wrote to James Fairfax are glimpses of village life around him. One of them reads:

> When Mr Britten, who is the seventeen thousandth undergardener at Grimsthorpe [a seat of the Earl of Ancaster, owner of Galton's benefice] saw someone (Mr Leeson, a wood cutter) stealing plums from an empty garden, he shouted out that they were 'th' Earl of Ancaster's plooms, none o' yourn'; whereupon Leeson replied 'A poor man may have 'em, as well as the birds.' 'Aye,' answered Britten, who was at the window in his night-shirt (or his day-shirt doing duty) 'but doan't tak' the whole lot; I'm cooming mesel' tamarrer.' In the morning, he did not find enough to satisfy his wife, and Mrs B. has been telling Mrs L. (and incidentally all the neighbours) what she thinks of her. 'I'm not a woman who minces words,' she says; 'an' I call it thieving!'[68]

That simple sketch has the makings of a village scene comparable theatrically with those of Thomas Hardy and J.M. Synge. However, any development upon such thoughts was interrupted by more sickness. Consequently, on medical advice, Manning embarked for Australia and a sunnier clime, landing at Sydney in December 1932.

The public attention which Manning attracted on arrival in Sydney as author of *Her Privates We* soon subsided while local critics, unable to

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67 Marwil, pp.286-87.

68 Fairfax papers, No.53, letter dated 7 September, 1908. Another amusing village incident is recorded, apparently after Fairfax's request for more of them, in No. 54, dated 12 September, 1908.

classify him in an Australian literary context, lost interest too so that he was left free to merge into his immediate family concerns. Of his siblings only Henry, an older brother, at that time Attorney-General for New South Wales, had inherited their father's political and business drive. Papers left by Manning in the family home after his departure included his drafts of speeches for Henry as well as sketchy pieces for plays. His stay in Sydney seems to have been no happier than earlier visits. Family problems crowded in on him and his continued poor health distressed him although superficially it improved enough for him to return to England in April 1934.

No sooner did Manning's ship enter the English Channel than he was stricken with a chill and the menace of pneumonia, resulting in his immediate transfer to a nursing home followed by several weeks convalescence with friends. He then moved into lodgings in Bourne and, with what must have become an instinctive gesture, took up his pen to work, not at the meditated novel on village life but further agonisings over *The Golden Coach.* Lawrence learned of Manning's low state and responded:

> Peter Davies wrote to me that you were still consumed with a longing to write that old book which has so often refused to come to you. I beg of you, don't. [...] There are so many books, and you have written two of the best of them. To covet a third is greedy [...] please don't do violence to yourself for some fancied reader's sake. You have a spacious and upholstered niche in our literature. Rest in it.[69]

Advice well meant no doubt, but cold comfort for one smitten with the dream of Alnaschar, the subject of a parable in Richard Burton's *The Book of The Thousand Nights and a Night*, who is exposed to the futility of unrealisable hopes. Manning replied inviting Lawrence to visit him. Before they could meet however, Manning contracted another bout of pneumonia, in February 1935, from which he died. T.S. Eliot was one of a small number of mourners attending his funeral, and a few friends wrote their obituaries, among which

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[69] Brown, 16 November 1934, pp.498-99.

Eliot's is memorable for its unvarnished truth concluding with a comment on time's fickle estimate of merit:

> We have to record with regret the death of an early and valued, though infrequent contributor to *The Criterion*, Frederic Manning. Manning's health was so poor, necessitating a nomadic life in search of climate, that he was able to have neither of the requisites for a reputation in one's own time: a considerable output of writing or a wide social acquaintance. The small number of his writings is not by any means due to ill health alone: he was an exceedingly, indeed an excessively fastidious writer; and spent as much energy in rewriting and destroying what he had rewritten, as would suffice to account for a number of ordinary books. He left *Scenes and Portraits*, a book of imaginary historical dialogues; two small books of verse; and one book, published anonymously, *Her Privates We*, which had a wide and immediate success. His passion for perfection became almost indistinguishable from a passion for destruction of his own work; even *Her Privates We* might never have been written, I believe, without the insistant urging of a friend who published it. Like the late F.S. Oliver - also a friend of *The Criterion* - he was without ambition for notoriety, and had a style of writing, and a frame of mind, suited to a more cultured and better educated age than his own.[70]

Eliot's calculated but sincere praise complements the warmth of Lawrence's effusive eulogy quoted at the commencement of this chapter. Together they form a broad appreciation of a highly literate, alert and creative mind.

Frederic Manning's final image is of one careworn, drained of the vitality to develop the ideas he cherished, and with his historical romance *The Golden Coach*, the bane of his life, still less than half finished twenty-five years after its conception. He seems a paradigm case of the exhaustion of the depleted adult generation in the bleak decades from 1919 to 1939[71]. However, as these Notes indicate, and the following chapters attempt to substantiate, his literary achievement was remarkable in its scope and quality. It was the writing of poetry which initially attracted his attention and tested his skills. Therefore this examination turns first to discuss in detail his three volumes in that genre.

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[70] T.S. Eliot, *The Criterion*, Vol.XIV, April 1935, p.436.

[71] T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, Part V, 'What the Thunder said', one of its themes being 'the present decay of eastern Europe.'

CHAPTER 2

POETRY

Practically all of Frederic Manning's poetry is contained in only three slim published volumes, *The Vigil of Brunhild* (1907), *Poems* (1910) and *Eidola* (1917). A scattering of other poems appears in contemporary periodicals, while his surviving correspondence includes a few more or makes passing reference to some fewer still which either remain unidentified, or were lost or abandoned. There is some overlap between his poetry and prose composition, poetry at first claiming most of his attention but later giving way entirely to prose. His reading ranged widely under Galton, taking in the Classical, through to the Medieval, Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, up to the Romantic and the literature of his own day, with particular attention given to the various poetic forms developed during those periods.

Throughout his life Manning was his own most severe critic, constantly revising and discarding successive drafts. His last publisher Peter Davies remarked in his obituary of Manning:

> Those privileged to know him will agree that he had no living intellectual superior; constant ill-health, combined with an extreme fastidiousness, curtailed the literary output which might have been expected from so fine and penetrating a mind and the modesty and aloofness which prevented him from putting his name to the most successful of his books robbed him of the personal fame which would have been his had he cared to claim it. But both *Her Privates We*, a best-seller immediately on publication and in constant demand ever since and the exquisite *Scenes and Portraits* are as clearly marked out for immortality as anything written in the present century.[1]

For these reasons, and others which will be considered in due course, his literary output is small. Manning himself viewed his reticence in more ascetic terms as revealed in a letter he sent to encourage James Griffyth Fairfax's poetic ambitions, asserting therein, with a touch of raillery, that poetry is born out of self-punishment:

> How do your poems turn out? I am glad that you should seem a little discontented with them. Discontent is salvation. Poets suffer a kind of vicarious martyrdom for the salvation of the world; and the more discontented you are, the greater will be

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[1] *Saturday Review of Literature*, 18 May, 1935.

> your success. Pain is salutary and enables us to realize our ideals, more or less.[2]

In another letter to the same recipient he wrote that 'tragic things were more permanent than joy, and [...] poetry deal[s] with what is permanent in human emotions.'[3] He seemed wary of effusive emotional display, probably seeing it as meretricious, an attitude which Arthur Galton very likely encouraged in Manning as commendable self-discipline since he believed that 'The novice, who would command the secrets of the Art, must submit himself to a long apprenticeship, and to the most rigorous training'.[4]

Variations on this preoccupation with restraint and its consequences permeate much of Manning's writing. Hence his attitude to life is pensive. But even so it lacks the bitterness or dearth of artistic vision one might expect. On the contrary, in fact, one senses a glow of ennoblement intensifying as one reads through his canon, and coming to an admirable climax in *The Middle Parts of Fortune*.

Before 1916 Manning's poetry reflected the nineteenth century Galtonian standards he upheld loyally but occasionally showed signs of breaking, many of his poems being based on an interest in Classical literature and myths, and in his own translations from modern western European writers, particularly French and Italian, with his eclecticism extending from Thomas Gray to William Morris to J.M. Synge. Later poems include impressions arising from his personal, and more especially his wartime, experiences. His shorter poems often exhibit a kind of self-parody incorporating ephemeral ghostly figures symptomatic of withdrawal into a private world, there to be the prey of inner voices. He carries into his narrative poems a delight in

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[2] Fairfax collection, No.53, 7 September 1908.

[3] Fairfax collection, No.72, 8 January 1909.

[4] Arthur Galton, 'The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold', *Hobby Horse*, Vol.6, 1891, p.94.

metrics along with a highly developed sense of irony. In poetry and prose he explores the concepts of deity and faith and the conflicts they generate both between Church and State in matters of government and in individuals between episcopal discipline and sectarian liberalism.

The experience of warfare in France in 1916 propelled Manning from a sheltered life of physical and mental indulgence into one of stark new reality confronting him with discipline, discomfort, destruction, and death sudden and violent. Where previously he could choose solitude and reverie he now faced constant interruption and the necessity of sharing his time and space, in close communion with hundreds of strangers mostly alien in thinking and background to himself. It was natural for him, as a writer, to wish to express his response to this disjunction of life style between Edenham vicarage and the Somme battlefield through writing, and in his writing through the form which came most readily to hand because of limited time and space, his poetry. But while these new circumstances thrust him into a new learning experience necessary to his very survival, he saw that they also imposed new criteria upon his writing. Out of this situation emerged a style radically different from that of his former musing, to convey shock and crisis through linguistic energy, an excursion into Modernist expression. The resulting output was small but fruitful. After the war Manning succumbed to periods of ennui from which he recovered to write substantial prose works, but only an occasional undistinguished poem.

The following discussion of Manning's published poetry is threefold in its approach. Firstly it summarises and quotes freely from his long narrative poems, *The Vigil of Brunhild*, 'Theseus and Hippolyta' and 'Helgi of Lithend' in order to illustrate his gifted versification, his sense of drama and history, and his synthetical ability to construct personality and character, as well as to trace his purpose in using these poems to introduce

and develop arguments around philosophical questions important to him. Secondly the shorter poems are discussed either individually or in groups where relationships are perceived to exist between them. Some of them extend the philosophical questioning already raised in the narrative poems, others explore the phenomenon of personal withdrawal into privacy, while a few pursue arbitrary themes, seemingly more spontaneous in conception. Thirdly it has been thought necessary throughout to draw attention to Manning's extensive erudition and the poetic skill with which he incorporates it in his writing.

i. 1907: *The Vigil of Brunhild*

Manning's first published book, *The Vigil of Brunhild*, is a long narrative poem of fifty-eight pages comprising approximately thirteen hundred lines. Its theme, while centred on the plight of Brunhild, an historic figure, Queen of Austrasia and Burgundy in the late sixth to early seventh centuries, is fictional and meditative rather than historical. As he explains in his Introduction it is 'more spiritual than real', intended, as he further explains

> to show her [Brunhild] at the moment of complete renunciation, a prisoner in her own castle of Orbe on the banks of the lake of Neuchâtel, after she had been betrayed by her own army, and had become the prey of her own rebellious nobles; and the poem is but a series of visions that come to her in the stress of her final degradation, while she is awaiting the brutal death which the victors reserved for her.

In order better to appreciate Brunhild's situation (and Manning's literary scholarship) some historical knowledge of her background is useful. She was a member of the ruling family of the Visigoths, the Western Goths

from the Balkans, who invaded and occupied southern Europe during the third century and onwards. They formed settlements in the south of France and in Spain, their kingdom in the latter lasting into the eighth century.

J. Knight Bostock says of Brunhild:

> The Visigoths provided German literature with no complete legend, but one of their princesses, Brunichildis, who married the Frankish king Sigibert in 567, may have been the historical prototype of the Brünhilt of the *Nibelungenlied* [...].[5]

As the Visigoths swept south out of Germany inter-racial enmity developed between them and the Franks. Later in his *Handbook* Bostock enlarges upon Brunhild's situation:

> Throughout the sixth century the history of the [Frankish] Merovingian dynasty is a catalogue of sordid murders for personal ambition.
>
> The efforts of Brunichildis, the strong-minded daughter of the Visigothic king Athanagild and wife of King Sigibert, Clovis's grandson, to avenge her sister Gailswintha, who had been murdered in 567 by her husband, King Chilperich, a brother of Sigibert, for the sake of her dowry and to please his mistress Fredegunda, have very possibly contributed to form the historical background of the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied.*[6]

Manning, for his part, states in his Note to the poem that he drew his information from 'the *Histoire de France* edited by M. Ernest Lavisse' with 'modifications [...] suggested by A. Thierry's *Recits des Temps Merovingiens*, and by Dean Kitchin's *History of France.* '(59 and 61)[7]

The poem is written in blank verse, incorporating the loose rhythms and structure of dramatic dialogue. As a result the poem slips comfortably into the narrative mode which its subtitle claims for it.

While occupied with writing *The Vigil*, Manning made heartfelt reference to it in a letter to Fairfax, adding a mention of his current reading

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[5] J. Knight Bostock, *A Handbook On Old High German Literature* revised by K.C. King and D.R. McLintock 1976 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), pp.13-14.

[6] Bostock, p.86.

[7] Bracketed numbers against text and quotations refer to page numbers from the original publication of *The Vigil of Brunhild.*

interests:

> Brunhild fascinates me, and I will hear no evil of her:-
> 'The blind, remorseless, progress of the world,
> Sombre and threatening, her figure cut
> Prow-like; and loomed through huge, tempestuous night
> Toward a doom obscure and imminent.'
> When I am not writing in this strain, I am reading Curtius' *Greek History*. Curtius is almost as monumental as Mommsen. By the way, you must read Renan's preface to *L'Histoire du Peuple d'Israel* where he defines the influence of the Hellenic, the Hebraic, and the Roman genius upon the modern world.[8]

Then, a few weeks later he informed Fairfax,

> Brunhild is finished and I am satisfied with her, on the whole. Things in her that seemed contradictory of each other at first, have now dropped into their proper place, and the complete character is fairly convincing and human. I sacrificed a good deal in my attempt to present her in the round, and in relying almost entirely upon moral touches for the effect: as it is she seems a figure in the void against a back-ground barely suggested; and I think that this makes her tragedy more intense, and gives to her an almost superhuman character. Of course, I am still too near to her, to judge whether she is successful or not; and I should be superhuman myself if I were not prejudiced in her favour. You will not be prejudiced: and, even if you say savage things of her, I promise to listen to you on the subject with a feeling, or at least an affectation, of humility.[9]

At this present distance one may judge more easily than himself and Fairfax whether he did succeed in creating a 'convincing and human' character.

The key to his quest is contained in the poem's brief Introduction. There Manning raises and comments upon the phenomenon of the 'intervention of women in the course of the world's history', seeing that situation furnish 'events upon which poets delight to meditate.' He identifies three kinds of 'events' which excite 'delight'. The first events are those of 'sinister and tragic significance' whose chief value is to illustrate 'in rude collision the ideals and realities of life'. His second kind covers 'the common humanity of the central figures in direct conflict with the inhuman march of circumstance'; and his third category groups 'the processes through which

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[8] Fairfax collection, No.27, 2 June 1907. The punctuation of this four-line extract differs in four places from that on page 45 of the published text.

[9] Fairfax collection, No.30, 26 June 1907.

these central figures, like Lady Macbeth or Cleopatra, are made to transcend all conventional morality, and, though completely evil [a harsh verdict against the above two women] in the ordinary sense, to redeem themselves and win our sympathy by a moment of heroic fortitude, or of supreme and consuming anguish.' Are these beliefs as blameless as they seem, or do they conceal a mischievous intention?

A previous analyst[10] thinks they do, by reading this introductory statement in remarkably narrow terms:

> Underlying this is a highly debatable assumption - that women naturally belong outside the rough-and-tumble of history and so any attempt on their part to enter it has disastrous consequences. It can also be questioned if an extraordinary ethical status is peculiar to female tragic protagonists; what of Faust?

The assumption Haq mentions and the peculiarity he questions are very difficult to extrapolate from Manning's words as he places a wrong interpretation on Manning's phrase 'intervention of women'. Manning was not unschooled in the theory of tragedy. Nor was male chauvinism one of his faults; where the opportunity for it occurs in his works there is simply no evidence of it.

Early in the narrative section of *The Vigil* Manning's heroine awakens to the exceptional sensations of her first pregnancy:

> Some whisper promised me another Spring
> Thrilling within my body, and I felt
> The first strange wakenings of motherhood,
> The pledge, and prophecy, of future Kings.
> [...]
> Dreaming on all the promise, that I held,
> And all the storm and stress life held for him. (8)

The lines express tender and sensitive regard by Manning for a uniquely female function. Evidence does exist from Manning's everyday life of his

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[10] K.M.H. Haq, 'Frederic Manning: A Critical and Biographical Study' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 1981), p.128.

respect for women. To the seriously ill daughter of Sir William Rothenstein, the portraitist who drew Manning's likeness five times over a period of twenty-one years, he proffered his solicitude through a letter to her father (17 August, 1924):

> Humanity is nobler in its sufferings, than in its victories. But a crowd suffering or victorious is irrelevant beside the individual soul.[...] Give my love to Rachel and tell her I love her wise patience, and that I hope she is even now colouring to the golden brown of the wheat ripening opposite my window. You seem to me two people wrapped up in love, as in a warm cloak; and I can only send my love to salute it.[11]

In acknowledgment Rothenstein wrote, 'Manning speaks beautifully of the relations between my daughter and myself.' Other women were respected by Manning for their individuality, for example Eva Fowler and her three younger sisters, and Ryllis Hacon who as Amaryllis Bradshaw was a former 'Rossettian' artist's model to Rothenstein and others before marrying Llewellyn Hacon, a friend of Galton and Oscar Wilde. Also,

> He became friendly with another rich American hostess, Mrs W N Macmillan of Berkeley Square, and dedicated a poem to her. And he sometimes spent a night, when in London, with Lady Russell, the elderly widow of his father's old employer, Sir Peter Nicol Russell. Other women with whom he was in friendly contact in the pre-war years included Dora Curtis, an illustrator of children's books, Mrs Charles Fairfax, a former resident of Sydney, and Lady Dunsany, wife of the Irish writer, Edward Dunsany. From 1906 his elder sister, Edith, an independent individualist, lived mostly in England, and his friendship with Ryllis Hacon lasted for many years, long past her husband's death. He was also acquainted with Rachel Annand Taylor, a Scottish poet and aesthete, with Mary Sinclair, the feminist and novelist, and was a friend of the novelist Una Taylor, daughter of the Victorian man-of-letters, Sir Henry Taylor.
>
> Manning clearly enjoyed the company of women and depended somewhat on their interest and support.[12]

As well there were Olivia Shakespear and her daughter Dorothy. Manning did express pique when the unexpected news broke of Dorothy's impending marriage to Ezra Pound, but then Olivia herself was even more put out by the

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[11] William Rothenstein, *Since Fifty: Men and Memoirs 1922-1938* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939), p.29.

[12] Coleman, pp.64-65.

event. However he soon rallied to tender his generous good wishes. The number of women included among the dedicatees to his published works is impressive and indicative of his respect for them. He also cherished a touching regard for the violinist Jelly d'Aranyi, of which more later.

Far from being the male chauvinist implied by Haq above, Manning impartially draws attention to the special dimension by which women, from the nature of their social and economic difficulties throughout history and their reactions against them, appeal to tragedians. Ever a seeker of the right word, Manning's choice of 'intervention' does not imply that women violate a male preserve of history, or that their presence in tragedy is quirky. Rather, he accurately explains how an approach to history and tragedy, unbalanced without the presence of women, is righted by their presence in its narrative and drama.

The Introduction to *The Vigil* defends the author's choice of narrative rather than dramatic form. Although he accepts the Aristotelian view of tragedy, in that the 'events and processes' of Brunhild's life being tragic are perhaps better suited to representation in dramatic art form, not narrative, yet even so such a view, he believes, would have limited his portrayal of her personality, character and psychology. His choice of form ran counter to contemporary popular taste and may account, to some extent, for the limited enthusiasm with which the critics eventually greeted his poem. For, while Manning was writing *The Vigil*, the actor and poet Stephen Phillips had already won enormous critical and popular acclaim with several poetic dramas, from *Paolo and Francesca* (1900) to *Nero* (1906), their form suited to reading rather than staging. Serious critics of the day even compared Phillips to Sophocles and Shakespeare. Manning however, preferred narrative because its 'smoother and easier texture' offered him greater imaginative freedom, a preference sympathetic with his artistic vision, but

probably influenced also by the judgmental outlook of Edenham vicarage and ultimately prejudicial to his commercial success.

There might well have been another reason, left unstated but just as fitting, for Manning's choice of the narrative. Although his declared aim with *The Vigil* was to concentrate on presenting a psychological rather than an historical figure, nevertheless a strong sense of history does pervade the work. From the historical era in which Queen Brunhild lived there survive outstanding examples of heroic narrative. Among them the writing of the epic *Beowulf* has been assigned to the mid-eighth century even though its remaining manuscript dates from *c.* 1000, and the Old High German *Lay of Hildebrand* is dated at *c.* 800.[13] The point would not be lost on the studious Manning that to pitch his tale in the narrative vein would be consistent with its setting, a point made piquant through other associations. One result of Galton the dominie's powerful formative influence upon Manning was to instil a lofty regard for Lionel Johnson, leading back through him to Matthew Arnold and thence to an undoubted awareness of *Sohrab and Rustum*, a narrative poem of heroic status repeating 'the international motif of the father-son conflict'[14] used in the *Lay of Hildebrand*. Eminent friends of Manning also saw the significance of narrative verse. Thus Ezra Pound's 'Ballad of the Goodly Fere' (1909), contemporaneous with *The Vigil*, and T.S. Eliot's 'Journey of the Magi' (1927) qualify as comparable in this context, although probably only in the narrowest of terms (so Eliot might protest). Complementary with the form of Manning's work is his motivation to tell a tale 'so entirely spiritual' that he has

> scarcely thought it worth while to enumerate the ironies of her situation. The squalor of her cell, the triumph of her foes, the prospect of her own immediate death become entirely insignificant beside the pageantry, the splendour, the romance

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[13] Bostock, pp.43-82.

[14] Bostock, p.82.

of a past which her memories evoke and clothe with faint, reflected glories.

The text of *The Vigil* is seen to consist of three parts - a proem (1-7), a long narration (7-52), and a dénouement (52-58). An examination of these parts shows that each contributes its share of poetic devices toward the composition's overall vitality.

The proem introduces most of the themes and imagery used later while, 'her eyes | Held something kingly that could outfrown Fate'(2), sets the insistent mood of defiant self-justification dominating Brunhild's attitude throughout her life and her final predicament. Facets of her character governing this attitude are brought out in several questioning themes. These themes are: the concept of sovereignty, the shaping of a better world, warfare and aggression, churchly influences, justice, youth vigour and beauty declining into age vulnerability and squalor, love in its various manifestations, compassion, repentance, doom, and the role of poetry itself. The imagery used to illustrate these themes is drawn from many elements of the natural world and from examples of human strife.

Every line of the proem, following an operatic construction, foreshadows some event in the narrative it precedes, demonstrating the writer's skill at concentrating information through compression. To the priest who intrudes upon Brunhild's incarceration, she exclaims,

"Go from me," then she said; "thou knowest how
My life has been as angry as a flame,
Consumed with its own passions. Go from me:
Thou couldst not bear the weight of all my sins.
Yea, go. I will not call upon thy God;
He is too far from me: could I again
Have my old strength and beauty, I should waste
Again the earth with my delight in war,
And vex my body with the restless loves
That my youth knew. A life of war and love;
Passions that shake the soul; bright, ruddy flames
Devouring speedily this fretful flesh:
A life of clamour, shouting, dust and heat,

> The tumult of the battle, ringing shields,
> The hiss of sudden arrows through the air,
> And drumming hoofs of horses in the mad
> Thunderous fury of the charge, that breaks
> Baffled, like waves upon a wall of steel:
> Give me again that life of ecstasy
> And I shall leave your heaven to its sleep." (3-4)

This passage summarises much of Brunhild's character, echoing the Nietzschean agonistic note evident in two of Manning's contemporaries Frederick Delius (1862-1934) and Percy Grainger (1882-1961) a fellow Australian. Her excitability is quickly aroused to frenzy, like Coriolanus who

> would not flatter Neptune for his trident,
> Or Jove for's power to thunder. His heart's his mouth;
> What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent,
> And, being angry, does forget that ever
> He heard the name of death;[15]

or in her case, 'as angry as a flame,|Consumed with its own passions [...] that shake the soul', illuminated by a further Shakespearean analogy, Sonnet 73 where, in 'the twilight of such day' we see

> the ashes of his youth doth lie,
> As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
> Consum'd with that which it was nourished by.

She assumes an authoritarian mien and shows her contempt for sacerdotalism by dismissing both the priest from her presence with her repeated, 'Go from me', and his ordinance from her faith through, 'thy God [...] is too far from me'. Repetition like this example, makes an effective impact throughout the composition, rendered more so by its economical use. Brunhild repines at her loss of the 'strength and beauty' which had glorified her lust for war and love. The tumult of that life is captured brilliantly in the last ten lines of mixed metre and alliteration in the above extract, its force emphasised by the final contrasting line, 'And I shall leave your heaven to its sleep', a foil compelling in its abruptly muted voice.

One further statement by Brunhild, again directed at the priest, is

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[15] *Coriolanus*, III.i.255-59.

quoted here to enlarge upon an early estimation of her character:

> "Ye, who are sheltered from the world, O priest,"
> Spake Brunhild, mocking him, "have time to pause
> Ere your minds fix the measure of pure truth
> And perfect justice; but our windy life
> Loses no time on niceties: for me,
> I gave such justice as I look for now;
> I swung a hammer on mine enemies,
> To forge the world anew unto my mind;
> My cause was justice in mine eyes, and those
> Who stood against me, enemies of God.
> Lo! I have failed of all my purposes,
> And age has come upon me like a cloud;
> And these old shoulders groan beneath the shame,
> The bitterness, the burden of defeat:
> Yet I have seen the star, where others saw
> Only the froth and spume of angry storms." (6-7)

Right from the priest's entry into her dungeon cell through 'The huge door [which] gave|Creakingly, unwillingly'(2), Brunhild's enmity against him has kept them at odds with each other, and although she cuts short his sermonising, telling him yet again to 'Go from me'(5), he perseveres in his aim to hold her attention by shifting instead to a cajoling stance:

> "Nay, yet I shall not go; but rest and hear
> Thy story in the form it leaves thy lips;
> Nor question thee, but bless thee and depart. (5-6)

Brunhild's first response is to deride him. Then her attention moves to herself, to range gradually through degrees of justification for the expediency which ruled her own past conduct, and now accept as appropriate the fate awaiting her. She confesses failure and degradation, but from this nadir of despair rejoices in having followed her destiny, like Antigone who maintained, 'When I have *tried* and failed, I shall have failed.'[16]

The Brunhild of the opening lines, shown as 'an old eagle' sitting in 'wounded royalty' with her 'chin thrust forward' and 'throned in gaunt magnificence' in her despair, has changed during the course of the proem into a hunched figure of 'incarnate sorrow' with her 'lion's head' bowed under the

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[16] E.F. Watling (Trans.), *Sophocles: The Theban Plays*, 'Antigone' (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p.129.

bitter acknowledgment of defeat. Her decline into this state results from the priest's influence, he being her only communicator and the sole inquisitor of her scruples. Brunhild's transformation therefore raises several questions relative to the character Manning wishes to portray. Is she in a dilemma? Despite her protestations to the contrary has Brunhild, in fact, become reconciled with church doctrine or is she, at least, working toward that end in her sub-conscious? Alternatively, is she struggling to remain true to her declared principles? Or does she now see those principles as the product of her vanity and thus a waste of her much prized youth, strength and beauty?

Manning has subtly introduced a complex set of incidents typifying the hazards of human frailty from which literary skill quite rightly delights in shaping its most credible characters. His development of this construct, leading toward an assessment of his success or failure, is examined in the following analysis of the composition's narrative section.

After the strongly emotive language of the proem, Brunhild opens her narration in disarmingly mild terms:

> "When I came out of Spain to Sigebert
> The rude Franks wondered at my company,
> My Moorish falconers and deep-voiced hounds,
> My swift light-horsemen, harpists, lutanists; (7)

continued with an account of her life at court, in new surroundings, carefree despite the presage of trouble ahead for her as,

> the red torches mirror on the shields
> And burnished helmets their tempestuous lights:
> Ominous fires of slaughter, flickering,
> To flash out suddenly in angry flame. (7)

Quickly the levity of those days is exchanged for growing responsibility and adversity. Brunhild's reflections on the approaching birth of her child lead her to reject shallow amusements, to heed 'all the storm and stress life held for him', her unborn, and from that musing to adjudge the outcome of her

fate:

> the doom that Nature laid
> On women, to be careful harvesters;
> To plan, and toil, and build for unborn sons,
> To shape the future out of their own time. (8-9)

While these thoughts are running through her mind Brunhild learns of the brutal murder of her adored sister Galswith who was, like herself, a young bride among cruder foreigners. The crime evokes bitter irony. For just when she accepts that women's destiny is shaped by powerful maternal influences, suddenly she sees her sister savagely bereft of that destiny, and as a result 'the doom that Nature laid|On women' assumes the deeper, menacing, more subjective purport to the effect that individual women's welfare depends upon men's altruism, a circumstance possibly insignificant nowadays but certainly much less so in the era of the Visigoths. Wrathful at the death of

> Galswith, the white-armed sister whom I loved,
> The slim, fair sister with deep, dreaming eyes
> As blue as harebells or calm water are (9),

she is incited to wreak immediate vengeance. However 'wisdom counselled patience'. Instead she waits six years, in that time preparing for war against Hilperik and Fredegonde, Galswith's killers, and all the while fermenting her passion into hatred 'sweeter far than love'.

The unrelenting ferocity of her hatred is compared with the instincts of a hunting hound who tirelessly chases his prey all day and runs it down 'till his throat has blood'. Brunhild cuts across her narration at this point to question, 'O priest, was that hate sin?' Manning, the omniscient narrator, superimposes his voice over Brunhild's to intrude with,

> He answered not
> At once; but met her gaze with level eyes,
> Then answered: "Brunhild, thou must ask thy soul."
> Perhaps she sought there, but no answer breathed
> Her unmoved lips, close shut with a strange smile;
> Then with a gesture, grave, magnificent,
> She spoke again[.] (12)

As though to dispel a sudden pang of conscience she expresses forgiveness of all who ever transgressed against her, while yet retaining one colossal reservation in the form of a challenge, totally consistent with her aggressive nature, directed at the priest's plerophory:

> But answer, priest:
> I, who wrought wisely through long weary years
> To build a kingdom, where was turbulence,
> And mould a civil state out of this strife,
> Come at the last unto a shameful death;
> While Fredegonde, who wrought for her own lust,
> Died peacefully: has God been just to us?
> Bow not thy head; bear with my bitterness:
> Though God desert me in mine hour of need,
> Yet shall I carry a firm heart to death;
> Nor blame him, nor blame other than myself,
> Who never trusted other. (12-13)

In the narration to this stage there is much interplay of emotions, drawing upon the reader's response to unravel its various implications.

Love is a wide ranging emotion highly prized by Brunhild, 'Love fills me utterly, and is my blood'(30), only partly demonstrated so far in the text, and introduced by 'Love sate as a guest beside my hearth', referring to her love of conviviality soon superseded by the ambitious love of an expectant mother for her child, moving on to protective love for her 'sweet, frail' sister and concluding with implied dutiful love of God.

Closely allied with love is searing hatred, generated through anger, confusion and terror from the circumstances of Galswith's death. At this interface, in the heat of her passionate outburst, Brunhild questions the efficacy of Christian ethics. Surprisingly, it is Manning himself, rather than the priest or Brunhild through her narrative, who responds. He gives to the priest the cheerless, chilling, curt rebuttal, '"Brunhild, thou must ask thy soul"', and to Brunhild an enigmatic reaction, no visible soul searching but 'a strange smile' and 'a gesture, grave, magnificent'. Left thus to her own dictates, after forgiving all her enemies, she presents a carefully reasoned defence of her political endeavours which, despite their

good intentions, she finds lead her now to a violent end contrasting with that of the depraved Fredegonde, 'A bastard peasant, spawned in infamy' (28). To her enquiry, 'has God been just to us?', the priest remains mute. Admonishing him to exhibit the courage of his convictions, she extends her confrontation with theology by including God in her forgiveness, for deserting her when needed, and resolves to bear alone the full responsibility for her actions, as she has done always.

Of the three characters (Brunhild, the priest and Manning) in this mini-drama, Brunhild's role, as befits her star billing, is the most spectacular. She is both strong-willed and impressionable, responding to a range of contradictory influences with Manichaean zeal, instanced by quickly reassessing her values in order to suit changed circumstances, suppressing a natural impetuosity against the summary attack of her enemies and, most notably, equivocation in her religious faith. In this last instance she fluctuates between a desire for reassurance through the priest and, when that is not forthcoming, resolution to show her independence. In a worldly sense the priest is no match for Brunhild. She outfaces him in every skirmish, causing his retreat into the security of silence or platitude, barricaded in with unassailable dogma. However if pressed, feasibly his riposte to her thrust for a ruling on hate, revenge and sin could be:

> Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord,[17]

reinforced with, 'for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God',[18] to gain for himself the final moral and sanctimonious victory.

An additional factor complicates Brunhild's character in that its

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[17] Romans, xii.19.

[18] Exodus, xx.5.

interpretation is not restricted within the range of one mind. The extreme subjectivity resulting from her own first person narrative is modified by another viewpoint, the author's, voiced suddenly at this juncture in the text. Manning's omniscience introduces an element of inscrutability into her personality, not otherwise communicable, adding suspense to the tension active between Brunhild and the priest, and thence drama to Brunhild's manner of resolving the issue. Quite early in Manning's writing career he attracted Percy Lubbock's rather cautious critical approval, 'After reading his poems we expect a good deal.'[19] That was some fifteen years before Lubbock published his influential *The Craft of Fiction* in which he undertook an enquiry into,

> The whole intricate question of method, in the craft of fiction, [...] governed by the question of the point of view - the question of the relation in which the narrator stands to the story.[20]

Emerging in *The Vigil* is evidence of this same searching question being asked by Manning as he engages with the practicality of creative writing, together with his interest in other aspects of narrative structure later differentiated by Lubbock under the headings of 'dramatic' and 'pictorial'.

Finally, before progressing further into the narrative, there remains one more question to be considered at this stage, namely the direction in which Manning aligns himself in this contest of wills between the spiritual and the secular.

Ostensibly his sympathy lies with the secular through Brunhild whose heroic and tragic standing captures his imagination from the outset. However analysis shows that deeper feelings than this are at work within him. Strong religious influences formed a significant part of Manning's prolonged

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[19] Marwil, p.76.

[20] Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954 [1921]) p.251.

education. For most of his adolescent, and all of his adult, life up to that time, Manning had lived in the vicarage at Edenham with Galton. Galton's religious convictions had weathered conversions from Anglican to Roman Catholic and back to Anglican by the time Manning met him. Not surprisingly, those experiences made him a vehement, as well as an energetic, lecturer and prolific writer of pamphlets and books on religious themes. Manning himself sprang from a staunchly Roman Catholic family. His perspective on theology broadened through acquaintance with Albert Houtin, the French priest he met when Houtin visited Galton at Edenham in 1907. Although Manning was not a deeply religious man in the practising sense, he maintained a lifelong interest in the subject of personal faith, which he expressed most eloquently in his prose works. For example:

> The tragedy of faith is in its attempt to penetrate and inform the world. Churches, rites, creeds, dogmas, are no more than the deposit left by the action of faith on fact, the vestiges of attempts to reconcile forces opposed and incompatible. Every church may, in this special sense, be termed a *depositum fidei*. Launched upon the world as the expression of individual and personal values, faith is absorbed by the society enveloping it, and translated into the terms of moral, social, and political fact. A Church, in so far as it has a worldly and temporal object, represents the compromise which society makes with God.[21]

That the substance of Manning's 'tragedy of faith' as defined in his 1924 article should appear in a practical form in 1907 at the very beginning of his canon (the 'tragedy of faith' being one facet of Brunhild's condition)[22] indicates the conviction with which he carried this enquiry through life. Projected into *The Vigil*, Manning's philosophy reads thus - the 'opposed and incompatible forces' are faith's 'expression of individual and personal values' derived from God and accepted by Brunhild, set against

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[21] Frederic Manning, 'Critic and Aesthetic', *Quarterly Review*, (July,1924), pp.123-44, and repeated under 'Le Père Hyacinthe' in *The Criterion*, Vol.II, No.8, July 1924, pp.460-65.

[22] At a primary level, the 'faith' of which Brunhild talks may be simply faith in herself, a very Nietszchean posture.

society's 'moral, social and political fact' represented by the Church's compromise with faith and incarnate in the priest. Brunhild has no truck with compromise. Therefore she cannot identify the God of her faith with the God of the Church, and her denunciation of God to the priest is not a rejection of faith but rather, the affirmation of her God above that of the Church.

Those deeper feelings claimed above for Manning therefore go beyond the mere differences inherent in ecclesiastic and lay attitudes. They question the lesson that Christianity teaches. This lesson is not about a synchronic single, timeless code of morals and metaphysics, but tells a diachronic story, or many stories enclosed within each other, developed by the Church over the centuries out of Old and New Testament narratives into 'rites, creeds [and] dogmas'. Manning's meditations take him beyond the level of discourse about God and Christian beliefs into a higher realm of speculation upon God and His ethics, a translation from the diachronic '*depositum fidei*' of the Church to a synchronic definitive faith able 'to penetrate and inform the world'. From this polemic there follows an explanation for Brunhild's enigmatic 'strange smile' and 'gesture, grave, magnificent'. It now becomes clearer that Manning endows her with the ability to recognise her leading role in his 'tragedy of faith'.

The narrative continues with a résumé of the successful campaign by Sigebert and Brunhild against Hilperik and Fredegonde, culminating in their occupation of the city of Paris, a victory indeed, but qualified by Hilperik's escape and Fredegonde's refuge, heavily ironic,

> in sanctuary safe,
> The church of God's own mother sheltering her. (14)

The description of Brunhild's triumphant entry into Paris, in company with her husband Sigebert and infant son Hildebert, is noteworthy for introducing the other aspect of her passionate nature, that of sensual love. While the

crowd presses forward 'With sullen brows, or angry, wondering!', she hears above their murmur,

> suddenly a voice [cry] musical -
> *Lo, what a pearl Spain gave unto the world!* (14)

The 'well-remembered words' are spoken by Fortunatus, a poet, known earlier to Brunhild in circumstances only hinted at. This is the sole instance of an italicised line in the poem, all other direct speech reportage being conventionally differentiated by inverted commas only, and therefore is seen as another example of Manning's innovative approach to narrative structure. His reason for changing type founts equates with that adopted by William Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury*, and Virginia Woolf in *The Waves*, years later. But whereas Faulkner and Woolf use the ploy to indicate a time shift, Manning's purpose is to identify a different speaker. Their common aim is to sharpen the narrative by eliminating clumsy explanation and the type-script change is the authors' key to decipher their code. This line in *The Vigil* is clearly important to the writer. Its significance should not be underestimated.

Haq, in his thesis, explains its inclusion and related lines as:

> A curiously b trusive [*sic*] passage deal[ing] with Brunhild's encounter with the poet, Fortunatus, among the cheering throng that receives her into Paris. He is maddened by adoration for her; his imagination endows her with graces she really lacks. Brunhild sees such craziness as a family trait of poets, but we feel she is ventriloquizing for the poet:
>
> > There is a doom on poets; their fond thought
> > Builds an ambitious phantasy, and calls
> > The frail thing life [*sic*]; this gossamer of dreams
> > Each strong wind shatters. (B, 15)
>
> Much psychological and aesthetic exploration could perhaps have been carried out if Brunhild's relationship with Fortunatus had been allowed to develop, but the possibilities no doubt were curtailed by the demands of the narrative theme. Even as it stands it is difficult to relate it to the poem as a whole. Still, the points it makes, though scribbled in the margin, as it were, are worth noting. By her impact on Fortunatus, Brunhild assumes larger-than-life dimensions. A comparison drawn between his blindness and the blindness of the world illuminates one of the significant themes of the poem:

I saw the hopelessness
In him, the hopelessness in all the world,
Whose praises are as crowns corruptible,
Born, as their worthless blame, of ignorance. (B, 16)

In Fortunatus the poet objectifies the fascination his heroine holds for him.[23]

This largely dismissive reading of the episode, by addressing the obvious at the expense of the allusive, fails to notice Manning's craft or to grasp his intention. Furthermore it is highly unlikely that the meticulous Manning ever scribbled in margins anywhere, literally or figuratively.

It is misleading too, to suggest that 'psychological and aesthetic exploration' would be advantaged by developing the relationship between Brunhild and Fortunatus. Fortunatus is a deliberately incidental figure possibly suggested by Manning's knowledge of Adalbert von Chamisso's *The Strange Story of Peter Schlemihl* adapted from the German 'Volksbuch' of 1509 and, appropriate to Manning's purposes, rooted in a long and vague tradition, or he may derive from Thomas Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* similarly adapted. Manning makes clear his familiarity with Dekker in his review of W.A. Neilson's *The Chief Elizabethan Dramatists*.[24] Whatever his origin, Fortunatus is introduced at this point for two good reasons. Firstly he prepares the way for the entry of Merow as Brunhild's great love. Together it is they who carry 'psychological and aesthetic exploration' as far as is practicable within 'the demands of the narrative'. Secondly Fortunatus extends one stage further the theme of 'doom', as prefaced in

"Then first I saw the doom that Nature laid
On women, to be careful harvesters[.] (8-9)

Manning's craft succinctly compounds three elements of man into his Fortunatus. When those three elements are phrased in Shakespeare's fuller

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[23] Haq, p.131.

[24] Manning, 'The Elizabethans', *The Spectator*, 30 March, 1912, p.514.

eloquence they '[grow] to something of great constancy':

> The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact.
> One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;
> That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
> Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to aery nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
> Such tricks hath strong imagination,
> That if it would but apprehend some joy,
> It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
> Or in the night, imagining some fear,
> How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear![25]

Manning writes,

> There is a doom on poets;[...]
> There is a doom on queens as well, it seems[.]

Contrary to Haq's interpretation it is imagination, unbridled in the case of lunatics, lovers and poets, and hobbled in the case of the 'mob | Of idle chatterers whose souls are slime'(15-16), that 'illuminates one of the significant themes of the poem' here, not a 'comparison drawn between his [Fortunatus's] blindness and the blindness of the world', and the theme illuminated is 'doom'. The doom awaiting lunatics, lovers and poets is to be the victims of frail phantasy; the doom awaiting queens is to be misunderstood, a doom emanating from hyperimaginative minds as well as 'vulgar minds'(15), as both types heap on their victims ill-judged praise and blame born out of partiality and ignorance.

Meanwhile Brunhild shrugs off 'this wintry thought'. In Paris she revels in what eventuates as only an interlude of happy and secure peace, the while transposing all her thoughts into (in a mixed metaphor comprising elements associated with Zeus)

> eagles carrying
> The thunder of mine edicts through the world. (17-18)

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[25] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V.i.7-22.

The lures of statecraft and government emerge invitingly in her new situation, their possibilities growing tangibly:

> I counted now each step beyond clear gain
> In the slow progress from our lawless state
> To an imperial dominion set
> Over the wreck of that old Roman power[.] (17)

By way of solace from the grief of her sister's death she also visits the murder scene, but without avail because,

> that old lust for blood, unsatisfied,
> Dried up the gentle sources of my tears,
> And I turned back; nor thought to enter in
> While Hilperik still lived, or Fredegonde. (18)

Then news reaches her of Sigebert's assassination at Fredegonde's behest, his forces scattered, after he had pursued Hilperik and brought him to heel. Brunhild is devastated and is compelled to flee for her life. She tells the priest,

> So all my work was hurled
> By ruinous chance to nothing in an hour." (20)

This observation prompts an immediate reaction from the priest and they engage in another confrontation. At last he is bold enough to challenge her openly:

> "Brunhild, not chance it was, but punishment:
> The retribution followed on thy pride;
> And on thy lust, and hunger for revenge." (20)

Brunhild's retaliation is swift and sure. She questions,

> "Would God destroy
> A nation newly wakened into life,
> Because of my one sin; and give the palm
> Of victory to Fredegonde, whose life
> Was sin in all its many changing forms? (20)

and continues with a denunciation of the priest as the member of an intelligentsia offering cold comfort to one facing (a violent) death's unknowable and lonely course. She rejects his charge of 'mere selfishness' made against her; rather, she claims, she was the symbol of hope in others and more particularly, her mission was to 'Choose the best!' of ways ahead from intentions which, restated here, she still upholds despite the dire

consequences. Her consolation derives from belief in an after-life administered by a God vastly more compassionate than the priest's stern version of a Paraclete:[26]

> "One thing I learned, which is a part of hope
> With me: God knows how willing is man's soul,
> Yet how his life is clouded o'er with doom,
> And hindered by innumerable things;
> So he will never judge by what I did,
> But read my soul, and know thence what I was,
> As no man knows. (21)

Doom is now an obvious and dominant theme in the poem.

In a typically sudden change of mood she grows wistful, entering into a lengthy eulogy on love, firstly regardful of the (Tennyson and Wordsworth inspired) impact of landscape and nature:

> For I have loved the green lap of the earth,
> Its snowy toppling peaks with golden plumes
> Of sunset,[...]
> Yea, I have loved the green fields of the earth,
> And the gray fields of the eternal sea,
> [...]
> "And I have loved the seasons in their turn.(21-22)

Then follows an interlude contrasting that rustic harmony with her present situation:

> But in this little moment which is mine,
> While all my foes are sleeping, drunkenly,
> Among the dying lights, the broken meats,
> Which the dogs tear from the rush-strewn floor
> While even the moonlight sleeps upon the hills,
> I build again, out of my memories,
> The storm and splendour of my troubled life. (23)

In memory she returns to the

> Pomp, courtly festivals, and crowded days,
> Of lovers who bent yearningly to me, (23)

to recall the all-consuming love of her life:

> Only one face is there which fills my soul
> With some strong healing effluence, a grace
> Of twilight reveries when all things seem
> Merged in the peace of God, and we become
> Part of the clear, intense, eternal flame

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[26] St John, xiv. 26.

Whose motion is like music,[27] and we lose
Sense of ourselves in drawing close to God.
Love, that has cleansed the heart of pettiness,
Shows me the face of Merow in my dreams." (23-24)

Manning feels compelled to re-enter the narrative here in order to emphasise the depth and intensity of Brunhild's love for Merow:

And, as she spoke, the face of Brunhild lit
With radiance from that old love, her face
Softened, and age was a grace to her. (24)

Through this interjection the poem enters another illuminating phase, as though in the writing of it Manning recalls an inner personal experience. For, while he has Brunhild explain the difference between her respectful, immature love for Sigebert and her later ardent love for Merow, the making of that difference implies some struggle faced in Manning's own psychology. Here is the relevant passage quoted in full:

"Yea, I loved Sigebert; but all that love
Was but my childish wonder at the ways
Of men; and I clung close unto his strength.
Our friendship might have ripened slow like wine,
To be a cheer and comfort to our age,
Mellow with wisdom, tranquil, tolerant;
Yet is it but a shadow. Happiness
Is not the nurture of a steadfast soul;
But sorrow binds us with the bonds of love.
Love is a suffering, a sacrifice;
A hand put out toward all human pain;
A fellowship, through danger and the dark:
So was the love that Merow taught to me. (24)

This *cri de coeur* reads like a cry from more than one heart, signalling notice to search Manning's canon for evidence supporting the probability of a disappointment in his own life.

Brunhild's love eulogy continues at length. She describes her meeting with Merow, a knight-errant, while she is under the protection of Praetextatus, another priest, progressing into love once through their wary

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[27] Strongly evocative of the Aesthetic Movement and Walter Pater, eg his 'Conclusion' to *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, (London: Collins, 1961), [1873].

overtures tested by Fredegonde's treachery, then abandonment to their desires and their marriage by Praetextatus. Merow's serenading of his 'Queen of the white hands and smiling eyes'(31) does credit to his status as a proto-troubadour:

> And ever since mine eyes first looked on thee
> To see the wind lift from thy placid brows
> A tendril of thine aureate, sunlit hair;
> And ever since mine ears first heard thy voice
> Fall through the darkness like a gleam of light,
> Enchanting them with its swift wizardry;
> And ever since I felt the gentle touch
> Of thy hand laid upon my hand, which woke
> And troubled the deep waters of my soul,-
> My heart has been thy captive. (31)

His ecstasy awakens,

> strange hopes and strong desires
> [...] of how the world might come,
> In time, to be a garden, such as was
> [...]
> Eden, where you and I were left, alone!
> Ah, love, perchance our love might recreate
> Again that garden walled from our desire!' (32)

The Eden in Merow's mind is the later Renaissance concept of a Garden of Love presented as paradise, where cultivated landscape and decorative art try to outdo nature; a setting contrived to indulge the senses. But the two lovers are already star-crossed - '"Ah, God! what ruin lurked within his love.'(46) Doom hangs over them, and Merow's dream is smothered in irony. His garden is a chimera obscuring the real threat as conveyed more aptly in Spenser's allegorical Bower of Bliss.[28] Deeply in love they depart together

> Into the night, the company of stars
> Innumerable, and of fragrant winds
> Sweet with our secrets, murmuring delight. . . .

the eulogy trailing off with Manning's own discreet ellipsis. There follows a short coda notable for its pithy and affecting statement on transience subsumed in Brunhild's larger recollections, but graphic in isolation here:

> How softly come these visions of the past!
> Softly as shadows, or as glimmering sails
> Upon the moonlit sea, or like shy fish

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[28] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, II.xii., stanzas 42-87.

Through the green translucent waters, to depart
In sudden swirls, while silver bubbles rise.(33)

Those lines would grace a Shakespearean text.

Interposed between Brunhild's above retelling of her spirited courtship and that following, of her brief nuptials bliss, she launches one last fiery outburst against the priest. The difference this time is that she provokes him to self-defence in making his longest statement in the poem. She scorns his naïve idea of love and ridicules his questionable probity, taunting him with:

my bitterness
Has made my tongue a whip, I see, to score
The poor weak body which is consecrate,
Yet sometimes turns from heaven, desiring earth." (33)

In his reply the priest cleverly turns her derision to his own advantage by thanking her for reminding him that suffering, his chosen lot, is integral with knowledge and with humanity's path to God; that his love warms to the artlessness in children, God's 'messengers on earth', and through them finds concord with his deity. A more subdued, but not mollified, Brunhild responds. She correlates the priest's explanation of his spiritually fertile but physically barren relationship expressed in 'The fluttering caress of children's hands' to her own fruitful motherhood qualified with regret for being childless by Merow, 'hands' being the catchword to more nostalgia for her inamorato,

the gentle touch
Of ghostly hands put out to comfort me:
Hands that were Merow's, tremulous with love. (35)

The symbolism in 'hands'[29] draws its effectiveness from the subtle difference in susceptibilities between the priest and Brunhild, the one sterile, the other fecund, as conveyed by the contrasting emotions transmitted in the touch of the children's 'fluttering [...] hands' and those

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[29] Manning presents a detailed analysis of the symbolism in hands in 'M. de Gourmont and the Problem of Beauty', discussed in Chapter 3 here.

of Merow 'tremulous with love', both visibly shaking and therefore superficially alike but in reality profoundly different. The passage also includes a few lines attributable to Manning's recollection of his own childhood:

> But all these fleeting voices of our life,
> The loves and sensual desires of earth,
> Our joy in childhood, are but memories
> Of innocence in sheltered Paradise [,](34)

an observation already well made by a recent biographer.[30] This exchange between the poem's two antagonists develops into a complex interplay of attitudes resulting from both puerile and adult stimuli and again, since Brunhild's worldliness is greater than the priest's, she has the last word.

Brunhild retraces for the priest her and Merow's flight to Tours and refuge with another priest, 'wise old Gregory'(38). Their escape, at first an idyllic dalliance with nature seen through lovers' eyes, becomes a dash for safety when their pursuers gain upon them, even exciting hedonism in them as they ally the thrill of the chase to their perilous situation:

> Ah! then we rode
> With the keen sense of danger that is joy,
> Galloping down the steep and stony path,
> Abreast, where a false step would ruin all,
> As if we played a game of chance with Fate;
> And Merow smiled at me and I at him.(38)

Besides the obvious irony in this devil-may-care declaration it embodies the quintessential Brunhild with which Gregory is quick to confront her.

Gregory in his chapel, 'Sweet with the scent of cedar, and the breath|Of incense lingering like a ghost of prayer'(39), gives Brunhild probably the strongest dressing-down in her life. He accurately summarises her weaknesses - a temperament fiery, impetuous and deaf to advice compared with Fredegonde's better judgment and cool cunning, her infatuation for the

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[30] Coleman, p.39.

light-hearted Merow thoughtless of its consequences, and of her lost cause. Brunhild uncharacteristically accepts with good grace these bitter truths, admitting

> "'I have been blinded by the tears of Love,
> Lulled into heavy slumber with his wine,
> Till life slipped by me, fugitive as dreams,
> While I lay drowned in an excess of joy,
> Fed but unsated, and insatiable.(40-41)

She explains herself as one too easily diverted from the obligations of 'this interminable stress of life'(41) by dreams of enterprises and desires her 'many moods' frustrate. However she outlines for Gregory a grand scheme to rally her followers, outwit Fredegonde, keep Merow safe in Gregory's care until she has pacified her warring factions, unite the Franks into one empire, then engage in a holy campaign to 'roll Mahomet back to his own place'(43), and all this under the Church's patronage which is to be rewarded with the spoils of victory.

The charismatic Brunhild wins Gregory's approval in a remarkable *volte-face* by him. He becomes lavish in his praise, proclaiming, '"'Thou art a woman such as deserts breed"'(43), equating her with Old Testament heroines immortalised as champions of faith. In firebrand form he urges her into immediate action and pledges his full support. Brunhild's optimism on departure seems to be tempered by her unexplained, '"and many years|Passed ere I looked on Gregory again."'(44)

> The priest her listener continues unresponsive:
>
> No motion made the priest as Brunhild paused;
> His eyes avoided hers. (44)

Unlike with Brunhild, Manning does not use his omniscience to disclose the inner workings of the priest's mind. By innuendo he does suggest that the priest is wary of any further discourse with her, being possibly embarrassed by the strength of her convictions, yet he may be concerned for the rectitude of those convictions and for her salvation. She is a formidable adversary

as many before him must have discovered. After all, she has survived into her eightieth year. Nevertheless, charitably, he sees her as a figure 'serene', larger than the times she occupied, transported above the squalor of her dungeon and the iniquity of her ill-treatment,

> into a calm, majestic realm
> That eagles might inhabit, with her mind
> Intent upon the spectacle of life,
> Yet heedless of her fate [.](45)

He too is filled with 'a fearful sense of fate:'

> The blind, remorseless progress of the world.
> Sombre and threatening, her figure cut
> Prow-like, and loomed through huge, tempestuous night,
> Toward a doom obscure and imminent. (45)

These are the lines Manning extracted from his composition to impress Fairfax as epitomising his poetic frenzy, and quoted earlier. As we have them now, their punctuation is different, and thus the sense is shifted somewhat, making their impact and significance even sharper by strengthening the nautical metaphor.

The culminating event in the narrative section is the resolution of Brunhild and Merow's relationship. He soon tires of the stifling monastic life imposed upon him and breaks free to wander the countryside, stealthily and fearful, in the guise of a minstrel, drawn toward Brunhild. Meanwhile she, as planned, sets about reasserting authority over her 'proud rebellious lords'(48). This she finds difficult,

> for my lords were turbulent,
> Grown headstrong in mine absence, and my son
> Had not yet learned the art of governance:
> To play on rival jealousies, and split
> Alliances in factions; to dissolve
> Confederacies, as an acid eats
> Through base alloy of idols composite,
> Till the whole crumble; to lead many weak
> Against one strong, and win the name of Right,
> Come in full arms to succour the distressed,
> And break the bonds of tyranny; to pay
> The world with phrases; lead the ductile mob,
> Swayed by a momentary need, to ends
> Imperial, that crown our finished work.(47)

Her acute assessment of political life echos King Lear's appraisal, also from

hard-won experience, of court intrigues:

> So we'll live,
> And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
> At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
> Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too -
> Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out -
> And take upon's the mystery of things
> As if we were God's spies; and we'll wear out,
> In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones,
> That ebb and flow by th' moon.[31]

While intent upon these labours Brunhild sustains two set-backs, one being the news of Praetextatus's death 'by command of Fredegonde'(48). This report stirs in her, 'Strange intuitions of approaching doom'(48), the poem's final reference to this theme and heralding its climax. Then worse, she hears of Merow's getaway dogged by, 'the hounds of Fredegonde'(49), and suffers a harrowing period of concern for his safety until her fears are fully realised with the arrival of partisans bearing Merow's mutilated corpse. Slowly, helped by her comforting son, she emerges from the shock of this disaster:

> Alas!
> He was not there with me, but on the wind,
> In every tree, his soul went wandering,
> Through all the world dispersed. Yet still I spoke
> Gently to him, and kissed him; till my son
> Wept piteously by me, until tears
> Gathered in mine own eyes and I too wept
> In silence, by the body of my love."(52)

Her grief is absolute, her torment somewhat mitigated by accepting Merow's death as the flight of his soul to nature while yet she wills response from his physical remains.

Following the intrinsic energy and emotion packed into the narrative, the dénouement reflects on broader issues raised through Brunhild's exploits. However there is one transitional passage in which Brunhild, her death looming in circumstances somewhat analogous to the ordeal Shakespeare has

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[31] *King Lear*, V.iii.11-19.

Richard III endure on the eve of Bosworth Field, she draws like Richard, a sudden involuntary shudder from the chilling pre-dawn air. And again like Richard, her resolution holds firm. She visualises a region at the brink of eternity where two spirit types 'throng|The gloomy portals' (53). They issue forth where she must enter - those the undistinguished who fade into nonentity and those with 'the light of morning in their eyes' intent to 'do the things we dreamed, but failed to do' (53). Hopefully one of the latter will take up her torch, another Caesar aspiring to found another Roman Empire, as she had hoped to do:

> Rome never bred but rulers; Rome, whose womb
> Gave to the earth this Europe which is ours!
> [...] I dreamed to raise
> An empire on the ruins of the old,
> Whose seat should be the Rhine.(55)

Although that vision must await the 'appointed time', even now, she feels, there is a popular undercurrent of desire for unity and regulation. She could not win the people's trust in her ambition to achieve these ends, nor are her quarrelling nobles equal to the task, but

> Is my assurance fixed; [...] in the mass
> Of common folk, who feel the crowning need
> For a co-ordinate and civic zeal
> That buildeth slowly, but whose work endures.
> There, where that people is, is Rome renewed;
> And where is Rome is Caesar.(56)

Her faith in the multitude is a reversal of her opinion of them when riding victorious into Paris with Sigebert, resentful

> To have each action weighed by vulgar minds,
> Criticized by the multitude; their [rulers'] names,
> Toys, with which fools have grown familiar[.] (15)

But feasibly it was not the mob then who roused her ire, but the poet Fortunatus, reminding her of her mortality.

As dawn breaks Brunhild dismisses the priest from her cell, albeit leniently this time:

> Shall I give thee thanks, -
> O priest, for this long vigil thou hast kept
> With me through all the darkness and despair?(56)

They neither exchange blessings (as the priest had promised to do on his entry) nor compassion, but she gives to his custody her treasured wedding ring from Merow, and is content within herself to face alone 'the little hour of pain' before her death.

The final scene shows Brunhild slumped in 'thick sleep' on the bench in her dungeon cell. The hour is set by bats fluttering and twittering unheeded as they return from their nightly jaunts abroad to their daytime roosts in the gathering gloom amid the blackened rafters high above her. Outside, in extravagant contrast, day dawns on a majestic vista of hills rising to jagged mountain peaks 'plumed with their sombre pines' and snow plains fissured by glacial ice diffusing the sun's bright beams into their spectral colours, as splendid in display as an arctic aurora. References to nature have been a frequent accompaniment to Brunhild's narrative. Now, faithfully, nature marshalls its best finery to honour her demise.

Frequently descriptions from nature are coupled with significant incidents in the narrative in order to heighten their emotional impact. This zealous use of John Ruskin's pathetic fallacy is fortified by the symbolism associated with stars. Citing specific instances of this figure - Brunhild defends her vaulting ambition with, 'Yet I have seen the star, where others saw | Only the froth and spume of angry storms."'(7); she sees Fortunatus's attraction to her as, 'And only I seemed to him like a star | Beckoning him.'(15); she exults at the news of Sigebert's victory over the Franks, 'I watched the bright stars one by one grow clear'(17); reflects on her subsequent reversal of fortune, 'close to death, | That lies before us, silent, shadowy, | With veiled horizons and no guiding stars,'(20); her eulogy on love of nature sees, 'night with its wide heavens, garlanded | With the innumerable stars,'(21); her imminent death is a, 'voyage out | Upon the darkness, void of any star.'(22); love-stricken for Merow he leads her, 'Into

the night, the company of stars | Innumerable,'(33); as the victim of many moods she admits, 'a great yearning comes on me at times | For an illimitable night of stars, | Jewelling with their fire the purple vault | Of heaven,'(41); Merow hunted for his life is forced to, 'lie | On some lone upland underneath the stars.'(47), and on, 'the lone | Bare mountains, sterile underneath the stars,'(49); Brunhild again, grieves for Merow, 'until the stars | Were lost in dawn,'(50); she faces the day of her execution with, 'Does the dawn lighten? Nay, I thought the stars | Grew paler, but a mist was on mine eyes.'(52); identifies the visionary light, 'of the new-born Syrian star;'(54); and finally makes her apocalyptic declaration, 'Lo! the dawn|Uplifts, unto the stars, her silver spear | And parts the darkness.'(56).

Symbolically stars, as lights shining in the darkness, represent the human spirit. Because they appear in clusters they also allude to multiplicity, thus standing for the forces of the spirit struggling against the forces of subjection.[32] In the context of *The Vigil* this symbol represents hope in combat with the more obvious theme of doom. One further noteworthy figure drawn from nature is the bat. Its mention in both the opening and closing scenes helps to define the composition's structural boundaries. Also, symbolically the bat's physical characteristic of hanging upside down represents inversion, the upsetting of existing order so that it may be replaced by its opposite.[33] Inversion appears in several applications such as opposing claims in the ambitions of Brunhild and Fredegonde, the life styles of Sigebert and Merow, individual and collective religious expectations, summary and prescribed actions, love against hate, and again hope versus doom.

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[32] J.E. Circlot, (Jack Sage trans.), *A Dictionary of Symbols* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), pp.309-10.

[33] *op.cit.*, p.159.

Returning to the theme of hope, another dimension is given the starry-cum-celestial setting by the promise of fulfilment through the Church. Besides Brunhild's own attitude to the Church already discussed, Christendom is represented by three quite different characters. They are the priests Praetextatus, Gregory and Brunhild's unnamed despairing confessor. Of the three, Praetextatus is the most benign. Without questioning he observes the responsibilities of his faith by giving her refuge and marrying her to Merow, incidentally paying for it with his life. In contrast, Gregory is a political person. He too gives Brunhild sanctuary, but in furtherance of his own aims. By accepting that Gregory and Brunhild are kindred spirits, his success in tapping a sympathetic vein in her mind becomes less astonishing, or conversely, his enlistment to her cause equally so. Of them both, just who is leading whom is not made clear. However there are grounds for belief that Gregory's political machinations do infect their relationship, by the innuendo in Brunhild's passionate outburst made at the very commencement of the narrative:

> "A priest!" she cried; "they send to me a priest!
> Mocking me, that my hand first helped these priests
> Till a priest's hand was strong to strike me down."(2),

Whatever the cause, her rage remains unexplained although the priest entering the dungeon as her confessor, 'bends before her, swayed by grief and shame'(2). Of course his priestly scruples could be shamed by the disgraceful behavour of Brunhild's captors rather than by the plottings of one of his brethren, but syntax adds weight to the latter view.

Further enigmas surround the depiction of the unnamed priest. His anonymity points up this condition by making him broadly representative of the Church's priesthood and hence the vehicle of its mystique. His contest with Brunhild has been aired above without effecting a satisfactory clear-cut conclusion. To the very end Brunhild maintains her independence from parochial religion while voicing several levels of intolerance against the

priest. If his aim was to ease her distress during her last few hours then he succeeded, not through any use of the sacramental offices deriving from his vocation, but by allowing her attention to drift back in time away from her impending death, a manoeuvre which any wise counsellor could have managed equally well conditionally upon, that is, the extent to which Brunhild, despite her animosity to the Church, would grant any non-cleric intrusion into her privacy. Has he succeeded by accident or design? The answer is not clear. In either case he should be congratulated on his forbearance at least, as she should be on bequeathing him two gifts. He leaves, taking with him, the one, her wedding ring, a material symbol of temporal love entrusted to his care, and the other, her integrity, the example of spiritual love steadfast in its faith in God with her standpoint that of martyrs: "'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him; *but I will maintain my own ways before Him.*'"[34]

Manning's literary merit is further confirmed by the strength of Brunhild's characterisation, a criterion Manning pin-pointed himself when, fast upon completion, he asked Fairfax to judge whether she was 'convincing and human'. Fairfax's sophistic response in his public review a couple of months later played down the question.[35] Instead he chose to defend his friend against some minor critical bias which claimed that Manning had paid too little attention to the savagery of the time by retorting that poetry performed a necessarily ameliorating function. Fairfax's response is Ruskinian in its similarity with that writer's reaction to George Eliot's realism as being 'the sweepings of an omnibus' and his argument with James A. McNeill Whistler for 'flinging a pot of paint into the public's face.'

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34 Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1946), [1924], Preface p.33.

35 *Isis*, (8 February 1908), p.205.

Dealing constructively with Manning's question to Fairfax, modern characterisation tends toward the portrayal of individuals rather than types. Brunhild epitomises individuality. This is shown time after time in his choice of incidents, and her substance grows as each incident builds upon her personality. A trait most prominent is her obstinacy. From this arises the work's major contention of individual versus collective reasoning, an analysis of which is developed in detail below. Manning's resolve to 'present her in the round, and in relying almost entirely upon moral touches for the effect' while also displaying her 'against a background barely suggested' is borne out in his actual composition which does communicate a lively plausible Brunhild, theatrical in form and apprehension, although with reservations, as will be explained.

Returning to what is seen as the work's major contention, exposure of the antagonism generated when individual and collective interests clash, Manning presents this in a reflective rather than an argumentative form so mild that published reviews largely ignore its presence. Symbolism links the wide ranging components of the issue, central to which are faith and the Christian Church. The thematic climax, as opposed to the narrative climax attained earlier with the death of Merow, comes in the allegorical last fifteen lines. There the full spectacle of nature's mountain grandeur, symbolising divine power, is deployed to suggest that God affirms Brunhild's self-defensive cry, 'God knows how willing is man's soul'(21), in a victory for individuality through Brunhild's apotheosis.

The Deity allegorised in this form reminds one of S T Coleridge's much fuller treatment in, 'Hymn Before Sun-Rise, in the Vale of Chamouni', the development of which analogy here leads into an assessment of the Church dogmatics and power against which Brunhild contends.

A letter written by Coleridge shortly after composing the 'Hymn' explains his motivation and afterthoughts to that poem:

> I involuntarily poured forth a Hymn in the manner of the *Psalms*, tho' afterwards I thought the Ideas &c disproportionate to our humble mountains - & accidentally lighting on a short Note in some swiss Poems, concerning the Vale of Chamouny, & it's [*sic*] Mountain, I transferred myself thither, in the Spirit, & adapted my former feelings to these grander external objects. [...] It has struck [me] with great force lately, that the Psalms afford a most compleat answer to those, who state the Jehovah of the Jews, as a personal & national God - & the Jews, as differing from the Greeks, only in calling the minor Gods, Cherubim & Seraphim - & confining the word God to their Jupiter. It must occur to every Reader that the Greeks in their religious poems address always the Numina Loci, the Genii, the Dryads, the Naiads, &c &c - All natural Objects were *dead* - mere hollow Statues - but there was a Godkin or Goddessling *included* in each - In the Hebrew Poetry you find nothing of this poor Stuff - as poor in genuine Imagination, as it is mean in Intellect -/ At best, it is but Fancy, or the aggregating Faculty of the mind - not *Imagination*, or the *modifying*, and *co-adunating* Faculty. This the Hebrew Poets appear to me to have possessed beyond all others - & next to them the English. In the Hebrew Poets each Thing has a Life of it's [*sic*] own, & yet they are all one Life. In God they move & live, & *have* their Being - not *had*, as the cold System of Newtonian Theology represents / but *have*. [...] If there be any two subjects which have in the very depth of my nature interested me, it has been the Hebrew & Christian Theology, & the Theology of Plato.[36]

Ernest Renan expressed similar sentiments in his *L'Histoire Du Peuple D'Israël*, the five volume treatise on Hebrew history whose breathless sixty page preface Manning recommended to Fairfax. John Ruskin also wrote independently on the interactive topics covered in Coleridge's letter.[37]

Many religions associate their Supreme Being or pantheon with mountains. Its Christian practice is illustrated in Isaiah lii.7[38], and more particularly in Psalm cxxi where,

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[36] H.J. Jackson (Ed.), *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Selected Letters*, (Oxford: OUP, 1988), letter to William Sotheby, 10 September, 1802, pp.114-15.

[37] E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (Eds.), *The Works of John Ruskin*, (London: George Allen, 1903-12), in thirtynine volumes of which in particular Vol.VI containing 'Of Mountain Beauty' pp.9-466, wherein 'The Mountain Gloom' pp.385-417 and 'The Mountain Glory' pp.418-66 include many statements, along with others scattered throughout the volumes, strongly compatible with Coleridge's views.

[38] 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!'

> The archetypal sweep of the poetic landscape in this brief piece is remarkable. The speaker lifts his eyes to the mountains and, in a characteristic biblical association of terms, moves from mountains to heaven and earth and their Maker. [...] The point of the poem is that the Lord is quite literally a guardian or watchman who never sleeps, who always has his eyes open to keep you from harm. [...] Altogether, the poem is a quintessential expression of the poetic beauty of Psalms in its artful use of a purposefully limited, primary language to suggest a kind of luminous immediacy in the apprehension of the world through the eyes of faith.[39]

But such 'apprehension' in the individual is a rarity. The 'luminous immediacy' seen by Brunhild 'through the eyes of faith' is the very agent which sets her apart from, and makes her an embarrassment to, dogma's adherents.

God in his omniscience knows the truth of Brunhild's faith and therefore validates her appeal to Him to, 'read my soul, and know thence what I was, | As no man knows me'(21). However lesser mortals, lacking such insight through their indoctrination from dogmatics, see faith and the Church as inseparable moieties of a sanctified whole. It is unfortunate that their 'religion should appear so conveniently to provide that non-human sac into which many human problems demanding human resolution have been thrust.'[40] Manning's poem explores two patterns of inversion present in humanity, the one of hope against doom, the other polarising religious thought into enquiry and bigotry. The latter confrontation, demanding human resolution, but thrust away into the 'non-human sac', is brought out by Manning. His enquiry hammers away at the barricade of conditioning in order to open the way to enlightenment. The sanctified whole, a conditioning dear to less enquiring mortals, may be reworded as faith *in* the Church, and read in either of two ways. 'Faith' may be a noun, in which case it refers to the propagation of religious belief through ceremony and teaching; or it may be a transitive

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[39] Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Eds.), *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, (Glasgow: William Collins, 1987), pp.254-55.

[40] Jon Silkin, *Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War*, (London: Ark, 1987), p.238.

verb, in which case it means confidence in the integrity of the church's motives. Neither way is to Brunhild's liking as they both require conditioning and subservience to dogma. Therefore she occasions embarrassment to ecumenism epitomised here in the unnamed priest. That embarrassment allegedly materialised for Manning himself in a curious form.

Soon after publication of *The Vigil* an unfounded and unexplained rumour was said to circulate in Sydney, that the work was to be included in the Index of the Roman Catholic Church on the basis, one assumes, of an interpretation similar to the above, that it discredits institutionalised Christianity.[41]

The hoax could have had serious consequences for Manning through embarrassment to his father in Sydney, who (somewhat grudgingly) financially supported Frederic's residence in England. Manning senior himself trod a local tight wire. He combined his Irish parentage and Roman Catholicism with, rare for those times, a prominent place in Sydney's public life whose Establishment was then overwhelmingly Protestant and Anglo-centric. Embarrassment therefore gains an added dimension through Sir William's mixed loyalties. There is no firm evidence to support the rumour or to show that Sir William reacted against his son because of it, but its reportage, when made apparent to the poem's reader, adds external energy to Frederic's work. One senses a spirit of bravado insinuated into the poem (resurfacing in his reviewing for *The Spectator*), but in this case probably emanating from his discussions with Galton and Houtin. Unfortunately the dash he sparks off is not developed here to its fullest and most telling effect.

The Vigil harks back to stands taken by other writers of the previous

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[41] Marwil, p.117.

century. Although, on Manning's insistence, Tennysonian echoes are only coincidental there are other, more pertinent associations. One such is with the religious sceptics Samuel Butler (1835-1902), Mrs Humphry Ward (1851-1920) and William Hale White who wrote under the pseudonym of 'Mark Rutherford' (1831-1913), all of whom searched diligently for the key to emancipation from the religious and moralistic dogma they saw binding together Christianity's closed world.

In its subject matter *The Vigil*, along with some later Manning poems, is partly a commemoration of 1880s Morrisian influences. Morris's advice to an aspiring poet in 1885 was to 'elevate his means of expression from the daily jabber' to an implied,

> enthusiastic appreciation of mere language, which I think few people feel now-a-days. Study early literature Homer, Beowulf, and the Anglo-Saxon fragments: the edda [*sic*] and other old Norse poetry and I think you will understand what I mean.[42]

Manning's influences derive from Poundian sources too, although in strict fairness to him, it is Pound's early poetry which postdates Manning's work, not vice versa. Critical comment on the Pound of that period carries uncanny correlation with Manning:

> Collections from *A Lume Spento* (1908) to *Canzoni* (1911) exhibit a strong and reverent sense of literary tradition and a corresponding paucity of recognisably 'modern' subject-matter. Pound is ostentatiously indebted both to distant cultures - to the lyric conventions of Provence and Trecento Italy - and to the pre-modernist world of the Pre-Raphaelites. Almost from the first, his preferred poetic figures express a sense of anachronism, associating a response to a literal (and, of course, chosen) 'exile' from his American homeland with a more generalised, Paterian mood of 'homesickness' for an earlier age. The poems in the visionary mode are strongly influenced by Yeats - especially by *The Wind Among the Reeds* of 1899 - fusing remoteness with abstraction in line with Yeats's talk of 'images that remind us of vast passions, the vagueness of past times, all the chimeras that haunt the edge of trance'[43]. Poems such as 'In Durance' thus dramatise a feeling of alienation by

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[42] E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1955), p.879.

[43] W.B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions*, (London: Macmillan, 1961), p.243.

> evoking in Yeatsian style those 'far halls of memory'[44] in which the echoes of a more habitable past still seem to resonate.[45]

The point to be made from the above comparison is an explanation it supports, through common interests, for Pound's initial attraction to Manning's writing. Nicholls's further quotations from Pound praising 'exquisite loneliness'[46] and 'the great dead days'[47], emphasise this resemblance to Manning.

As has been discussed, although Manning delivers, through Brunhild, his proposition that individual and collective interests are at odds with one another, he does so conjecturally in passive reflection rather than decisively in compelling argument, at the cost of diminished force to his composition. Brunhild's 'faint reflected glories' lack the authorial vigour needed to strike home the vitality her personality begs. For while her effect upon Merow is well depicted, that upon the clergy, a matter more important to the subplot, is unresolved. Therefore, rather than the well rounded figure Manning hoped for, she emerges from a promising mould without the devilment, 'like Lady Macbeth or Cleopatra', which has ensured those characters' immortality.

Even more so Manning does wrong to associate his fiction with Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra. Subconsciously they act at cross-purposes with his design, their allure being pagan vanity although Lady Macbeth is nominally Christian. A better precedent for him would be Joan of Arc, for although Brunhild never could be considered a martyr to the Church as the subsequently canonised Joan was, yet by her death she does bear witness to her religious

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[44] Ezra Pound, *Collected Early Poems*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), p.115.

[45] Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), pp.167-68.

[46] Pound, 'Anima Sola', *Collected Early Poems*, p.19.

[47] Pound, 'Piere Vidal Old', *Collected Early Poems*, p.109.

faith along with her other beliefs. Similarly one may look beyond Joan to Brunhild while reading:

> When Joan maintained her own ways she claimed, like Job, that there was not only God and the Church to be considered, but the Word made Flesh: that is, the unaveraged individual, representing life possibly at its highest actual human evolution and possibly at its lowest, but never at its merely mathematical average. Now there is no deification of the democratic average in the theory of the Church: it is an avowed hierarchy in which the members are sifted until at the end of the process an individual stands supreme as the Vicar of Christ. But when the process is examined it appears that its successive steps of selection and election are of the superior by the inferior (the cardinal vice of democracy)[...].[48]

The circumstances under which Joan and Brunhild demonstrated their individuality were sufficiently alike for them both to antagonise authority, to lead them into being duped by their accusers into indefensibility when they expected reasonable justice, and to be abandoned by their profit-seeking followers for immediate gain. The adoption of a model as strong as Joan, to be held in mind while writing his narrative poem, very likely would have considerably animated Manning in his creation of Brunhild.

Finally there remains the matter of the concluding Note, penned by Manning to round off his statement of intentions begun in the Introduction. Therein he contends that although his story is more imaginative than historical, his presentation is probably near to the truth since:

> History is not a science: it is prophecy looking backward, and no doubt is often as far from scientific truth as the more conventional mode of prophecy.

His aphorism equating 'history' with 'prophecy' is sound. History is the accumulated knowledge of past events and is only truthful in so far as the way those events are interpreted, because there never can be a total recall of past events to render interpretation redundant. Thus history is prophecy looking backward or the contrived prediction, from a limited or selective number of previous events, of what must have happened. Prediction, either

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[48] Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1946), [1924], Preface p.33.

the historian's or the traditional prophet's, exacts a conclusion dependent upon information governed by the scribe's personal conception of the events leading to that conclusion, and since the prediction may arrive at the right conclusion for the wrong reasons it is not scientific. The significance of the aphorism is the symptomatic relationship it bears to *The Vigil* as a whole. He laboured diligently and aesthetically over his long poem covering an historical character's deeds and the standards she observed, to achieve a success diminished eventually by his caution. For while he succeeded in his intention to present a Brunhild 'more spiritual than real' out of 'a series of visions', his dedication to that approach restricted the examination of a greater task he discovered in the process but subsumed within the narrative, that of explaining 'the compromise which society makes with God'. In Manning's defence, generations of other scholars, mostly much more experienced than was the twenty-five years old Manning, have struggled to trace the 'scientific truth' or construct the chain of events required to elucidate the gist of that compromise. But it was an enquiry which Manning was not afraid to return to in his later writing. 'Truth' and 'faith' were among Brunhild's strongest traits. Manning repeatedly examines the concept of faith in his later writing, principally as the theme linking his essays in *Scenes and Portraits*, in several places throughtout his minor prose works discussed in Chapter 3, and with deep conviction in *The Middle Parts of Fortune*.

ii. 1910: *Poems*

The poetry in this volume was written both before and after the publication of *The Vigil of Brunhild*, three of its items having been previously published

individually in literary journals (refer Appendix I). There is evidence of careful structuring of the contents in this anthology. The poems are presented in two groups, the first of which comprises fifteen short poems enclosed between two longer ones, 'Theseus and Hippolyta' and 'Helgi of Lithend'. The second group of twenty-two poems, all short, is collected under the general heading 'Les Heures Isolées'. Considerations of theme have obviously influenced this arrangement but, at first reading, the overall tone of the anthology is disrupted by the different, brisk, measure of those two longer poems. Following a full analysis, this point will be re-examined.

The opening poem, 'Theseus and Hippolyta', retells that part of the well documented story from Greek legends of Theseus's campaign against the Amazons in which he runs down their queen Hippolyta and ravishes her. This brutal episode is treated by Manning in appropriately forceful style, using alternate rhyming lines, extensive anapaestic rhythm, graphic similes, logopoeia[49] and enjambment in mordant combination.

The decisive battle is fought in a wheat field under a blazing midday sun. Images of heat and glare predominate. Theseus's charioteers charge the Amazon lines 'Through the wreck of the trampled wheat', into a hail of arrows:

> A sleet
> Veiled light, and the air was alive,
> As with hissing snakes, as with swarms
> Of the Spring by a populous hive,
> As with wind, and the clamour of storms[.]

The resulting carnage is a welter of 'broken, and brayed' bodies of humans and horses, pierced through by arrows and spears, slashed by swords, and mashed under horses and chariots. Human frenzy and ferocity are mimicked by the horses:

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[49] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul/Yale UP, 1934).

And the stallions, with foam embossed,
Fought, tearing each other with teeth,
In the red, blind rage of their lust,
Screaming; and writhed underneath
The wounded, trodden as must
Of the grapes trodden out in the press,
Empurpling the knees, and bare
Thighs of the men.

The Amazon ranks break under the force of this charge, but Hippolyta rallies them to counter-attack:

her face was a flame
As she rode through the tempest of war;
And they cried, made glad with the sight,
As those desiring the dawn,
When the darkness is cloven by light,
Cry for gladness: they rallied, upborne,
When she rayed as the sun through their cloud[,]

praying as she does so to her patron goddess Artemis for aid, 'calling aloud,

| As a maid might call to a maid'.

Artemis, like the other gods in the pantheon, could be ruthless towards those who aroused her anger. As soon as she was born she had gone to her father Zeus and, embracing him about the knees, begged from him, not ornaments or jewellery, but a short tunic, hunting boots, a bow and a quiver full of arrows. She devoted herself to the pleasures of hunting and when fatigued would strip and refresh herself by bathing in clear mountain streams. To this virgin huntress even the legitimate joys of marriage were repugnant. She made chastity a strict law which she imposed on her companion nymphs, and condemned any who so far forgot their duty as to partake of forbidden pleasures. Even those who fell victim to some god's trickery she cruelly punished. This then is the goddess Hippolyta invokes and Manning exploits to underscore his theme.

When 'the Goddess of shining brows' hears Hippolyta's prayer,

she paused from the chace
Upon Tainaros hoary with snows;
And a shadow darkened her face:
A shadow, and then a ray
Lightening, glorying, smiled,

As her thought pierced years to a day
Unborn, and an unborn child,
With the pure fount of his praise
Lifted to her, from the shrine
Rock-hewn, at the three cross-ways
In a waste of hills, as wine
Gladdening her; and she shed
A wonder, a terror, a fear,
A beauty that filled with dread,
A glory no eyes might bear
On her maid; stooped, hushed, from a height
Her thought, as a bird on the wing,
Rained down from her, swifter than light.

Manning has interpreted the ruthless side of Artemis's nature well. According to legend the issue resulting from Theseus's outrage upon Hippolyta is a son, Hippolytus. It is with him in mind that Artemis smiles maliciously while her 'thought pierced years to a day | Unborn' when Hippolytus, Theseus, and Phaedra as stepmother of the one and wife of the other, would all become locked in jealous recrimination culminating in their destruction.

Inspired by this divine intervention Hippolyta temporarily turns the course of the battle her way:

and they fled
As doves or as linnets fly
When a hawk that has towered overhead
Stoops, ravening, out of the sky
On their quires. But her arrows sighed
After them, swifter than feet:
They ran, shrieked, stumbled, and died,
Shot through with her shafts. In the wheat,
With the sunlight gilding their greaves,
Helmets, and shields, and mail,
They lay, strewn thickly as leaves
When Autumn has swung his flail.

However Theseus, some distance away, observes this development and settles the matter. Charging into the fray 'eager for blood' he puts the Amazons to flight,

So the women before him fled
In a rout, headlong, overborne,
For he drave as a beast all red,
With the blood of the prey he had torn[.]

Vanquished they lay, 'Heaped in a mound' by Hippolyta's chariot, 'Broken, and dying, and dead'. It is now her turn to flee for her life.

Theseus has only seen Hippolyta from 'Afar | Over the storm of the spears' but his response is enrapture. Her glowing countenance, athletic figure and truculent glory in combat rouse him carnally. He dashes after her, the chase continuing on foot after they are forced to abandon their chariots:

> She was swift; but he burned in the chace:
> He was flame, he was sandalled with fire,
> Hungering after her face,
> With a fury, a lust, a desire,
> As a hound that whines for the blood
> Of the hart flying winged with fear[.]

The further Theseus pursues Hippolyta the more intensely he desires her and the more anxiously she bolts, 'Fearing utterly, fighting with fate, | Stumbling'. He is goaded on by seeing,

> The wind,
> Lifted, and played with the fold
> Of her chlamys; and showed made bare
> The swift limbs shining, as gold
> From sunlight, and streamed through her hair
> As wind in a cresset of fire,
> As tresses of flame in the night,
> While she fled, desired, from desire,
> Till the brakes hid the flame from his sight.

The chlamys of Classical times was a short cloak worn by men, the garb Artemis probably begged from Zeus and chosen by Hippolyta with her patron in mind.

Having gained the refuge of the wood Hippolyta, mistakenly reassured, stops 'by a chiming stream'. There she,

> Listened awhile, hung her targe
> From a tree with her unstrung bow,
> Loosened her breast-plate and greaves,
> Bathing her limbs:

rather as Artemis might have done in the circumstances. Meanwhile Theseus, far from losing contact with his quarry, has merely slackened his pace, for

> The wood
> Hid her indeed from his eyes,
> But the track of her feet lay clean
> As the slot of a deer in the grass.

Whereas, until now, brilliant sunlight has irradiated the scenes of mass

violence, Hippolyta's ravishment is enacted in gathering gloom,

> in the ebb
> Of the latest tide of the light;
> Stars shone clear through the web
> Of the branches, beckoning night[.]

Shakespeare treats this conjunction of darkness and rape definitively in *Lucrece* when Tarquin, assaulting Lucrece,

> sets his foot upon the light,
> For light and lust are deadly enemies[.][50]

Manning generates additional atmosphere with an appropriate scene shift as well. He moves Theseus's outrage against the Amazon queen from the general mêlée of the 'wasted wheat' field to a sequestered glade where:

> The leaves fell softly, gilt
> With autumn, and tawny and red;
> And the blue of the skies lay spilt,
> Pooled, shining, from late rains shed;
> The tall reeds seemed to dream
> By the full lake's murmuring marge[,]

evoking a Keatsian season of 'mellow fruitfulness' ripe for plunder. These transitions of light and scene are unobtrusive but telling. They skilfully distinguish between, yet also merge, the narrative's earlier sense of violence and the later one of violation. While the vulnerable Hippolyta bathes, Theseus advances,

> slow
> Like a snake through the fallen leaves,
> Theseus crept on his prize,

and pausing just long enough to gratify his sight of her, he strikes. In the ensuing struggle Hippolyta's renewed appeal to Artemis is ignored, naturally enough in the light of Artemis's planned longer term retaliation:

> she, to whom spears
> Hurtling close were a zest
> To battle, felt the hot tears
> Well and fall from her eyes,
> Struggled not long, lay still.
> Theseus stooped on his prize,
> Drank of her lips his fill[.]

Thus with Hippolyta finally overpowered and quiescent to Theseus's demands

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[50] *Lucrece*, II.673-74.

he is able to exact his will upon her. Structurally the poem succeeds by employing Arnoldian trimetre[51] extensively, but rhymed, and effective in a dramatic sense because of its closeness to rhythms of common speech and action. In this story there is nothing to distinguish between the gods and mortals in their common disregard for life and finer feeling. To emphasise the point their savagery is seen to equate with that of animals, through the brute instinct of the horses in battle, and that bestiality reaches its ironic fulfilment, outside the story, through the death of Hippolytus by horses as Artemis predetermined. Moral simplism interacting between conduct and religion in pagan society is well reproduced in this story.

'Helgi of Lithend', the volume's other long poem placed parenthetically with 'Theseus and Hippolyta' is equally forceful. It bears similarities to *The Vigil of Brunhild* and 'Theseus and Hippolyta' but makes its own strong claims to literary pretension. Like *The Vigil* it is written in blank verse and irregular metre, the setting is historical bordering on legend, and the theme superficially the protagonist Helgi's reflections on his warrior life as he nears death. However there are important differences from *The Vigil*. 'Helgi' is less narrative more elegiac in form, combining something of the *ubi sunt* motif with the qualities of the lyric, at times also suggestive of the dirge and the lament. Historical and literary affinities with Norse heroes and the Old English texts *The Seafarer*[52], *The Wanderer* and the *Battle of Maldon* empower the work with an intellectual and emotional appeal much higher than the level attained in *The Vigil*. Also the characters are more intimately drawn and for all of these reasons 'Helgi' makes more substantial and satisfying reading.

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[51] Matthew Arnold, 'Rugby Chapel' (1857).

[52] Ezra Pound freely adapted his 'The Seafarer' (1911) from the Old English to suit his purposes.

It is immediately apparent to the reader that Helgi is a man of action and adventure, intolerant of inertia; nor does Manning beat about the bush. His first stanza makes clear his own and Helgi's style:

> What are ye women doing? Get ye hence,
> Nor weary God with prayers. But when I die,
> Lay me not there among the peaceful graves
> Where sleep your puny saints. I would go hence,
> Over the loud ways of the sea again,
> In my black ship, with all the war-shields out,
> Nor, beaten, crawl unto the knees of God,
> To whine there a whipped hound. Yea, send me forth
> As when I sought rich lands, and glittering gold,
> And warm, white-breasted women, and red wine,
> And all the splendour and the lust of war.

Helgi, impatient with the insipid courtiers gathered around him making a mockery of his lost prime, vilifies their heaven as an Eden tame and tedious. His homage is to Asgard, the heaven of Norse mythology, abode of the twelve gods and twenty-six goddesses, and of heroes slain in battle:

> There the heroes are,
> Whose armour rusts in ocean; and young men
> Who fared with me adventuring, and lie
> Now in an alien earth, or derelict adrift
> Upon the washings of the eternal tides.
> But they still live in Asgard, drinking joy
> Of battle, and of music, and of love.

He broods upon his present infirmity,

> Only I, I grow old, and bowed in head,
> While the dark hour approaches and the night,
> Exploring mine own soul, and lost therein[,]

yearning for Asgard from whence some day he will reappear, having been revitalised among his kind - he taunts his listeners - to invade their celestial mediocrity by:

> Battering at the crystal walls of Heaven,
> With brazen clangour of arms, and burn the towers
> To be our torches, and make all the streets
> Of jasper, and chalcedony, and pearl,
> Slippery with the bloodshed. Will your saints
> Pray back the onslaught of our lusting swords
> With any prayers?

For such men as Helgi the sea has determined their thoughts, deeds,

stories, and ultimately their exequies. He protests,

> I would not lie in earth
> Under the sheep; but send me once again
> Out through the storms, and though I lie there cold,
> And stiff in my bronze harness, I shall hear
> The exultation of the waves, the might
> Of Aegir, and the creaking of the helm,
> And dream the helm is in mine hands again,
> While my long ship leaps up, like a living thing,
> Against the engulphing waters, and triumphing rides,
> Through thunder of turbulent surges and streaming seas,
> Lifting and swaying, from trough to crest and trough,
> With tense and grinding timbers, while the wind
> Screams in the cordage and the splitten sail.

He draws a rugged male oriented metaphor of the sea:

> Ye have loved women, some of ye [a satiric note], and know
> Therefore how I have loved the fickle sea,
> Blue in the sunlight, sometimes, as the eyes
> Of laughing children, wanton as a girl,
> And then all hunger for us men, all fierce
> Passionate longing, and then gray with rain,
> Sullen. A very harlot is the sea,
> A thing for men to master, full of moods,
> Treacherous, as you see it when it crawls
> Snakily over sunken rocks, or slinks
> Furtively by, and snarls to show its teeth
> Like a starved wolf. Many a goodly man
> Women have loved and slain, but more the sea!

To this he adds a denunciation of the 'meeker women' about him now, contrasting their coquetry with the women he admires -'The wild things that men warred with in my youth, | Haggards to [*sic*, too?] gentle!' - when love-making was matter-of-fact, uncalculating, incautious and expedient:

> All time,
> Unborn or buried, meeting with our mouths
> In a swift marriage, and the sacred night
> Sweet with the song of arrowy desires
> Shot from the bow of life into our quick,
> And rooted there. Yea, life in one full pulse,
> And then the glory darkened, withered, dead,
> With lips dissevered, and with sundered limbs,
> And two, where had been one, in the gray dawn.

Helgi's monologue narrows attention to the woman who, won as prize in a raid years before, he had claimed as his wife. Then, instantly smitten with love, he saw

> in her,
> The music and the colour of the world, -
> The splendour of the earth and sky and sea,
> Were shadowed: all of life was in her eyes.

He has ever since lived enthralled by her grace and beauty while she has remained withdrawn, now sitting quietly nearby, gazing seaward and lost in melancholy introspection with, 'that strange patience women have | Whose dreams are broken'. For, although he had won her 'by the sword's right' and consummated their relationship,

> her soul
> Fled beyond reach of hands, remote, and veiled.
> She lay there as if dead, and all my love
> Was no more to her than the idle strength
> Which breaks upon the beaches.

We must read some distance on into the poem before we learn this woman's name, Gudrun, and its significance. As with Hippolyta and Artemis, so too with her, Manning's story is well founded on scholarship and compressed into a few felicitous lines. The Gudrun of literature is the heroine of the Norse sagas *Laxdaela* and *Volsunga*, translated by William Morris into *The Earthly Paradise* and *Sigurd the Volsung*. Manning greatly admired Morris. In an article reviewing *The Collected Works of William Morris*,[53] grading Morris among his contemporaries, Manning contrasts Morris's 'innate strength and vision' with Algernon Charles Swinburne's 'extraordinary verbal facility', drawing a stronger distinction between them with 'what is "vital" and what is merely "formal" in art. [...] is precisely the difference between Morris and Swinburne', and continuing he praises Morris's sense of characterisation:

> The men and women whom Morris has created seem to share our common vitality, to move among us speaking the same speech, using the same human gestures, suffering the same extremes of joy or grief, and feeling these as though they were physical sensations, in the same way that we ourselves feel them.[54]

The delayed identification of Gudrun cannot be accidental. From

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[53] Manning, 'William Morris', *The Spectator*, (8 July,-1911), pp.69-71.

[54] Manning, *ibid.*, p.70.

Manning's appraisal of Morris's structural skills in the same review article there is evidence that they are reflected in his own methods:

> Morris is probably the most Greek of all the Victorians simply by reason of the qualities of his style and technique, the perfect proportions of his work, and the power of his "constructive imagination." It is as if the Greek *architectonice* had been supplied in his case by his own instinct for design, for the filling of a strictly limited space with a flowing and continuous pattern, of which no part is more conspicuous than another. It is this very perfection of design and technique which hides from us at first sight the complexities of detail composing the whole.[55]

One such design, a character's name withheld until later, means that connotations associated with the name are also held back until a time more opportune for exploiting their significance in the plot. Even though Manning's Gudrun does not exactly match the person of the sagas her ethos, like Brunhild's in her origins, is extracted from those times with the ring of authenticity, if not reality, to strengthen his dramatic intent.

The expected retaliatory raid against Helgi is not slow in coming, led by Sigurd, a renowned warrior, noble figure and Gudrun's former betrothed. However Helgi remains defiant of the threat posed by Sigurd and the entreaty of his followers:

> Men came and said, "Lo, now will Sigurd come
> For love of her, to take her hence again
> And burn Lithend for vengeance." But I said,
> Running my fingers down the smooth, keen blade,
> "Sigurd will come! Why then, let Sigurd come."
> But they all feared him, and again one spoke,
> Saying, "Thy love will burn us, and our town.
> Are there not many women in the world
> To mate with, but the one he loves?" I struck
> The craven fool a damned blow in the face,
> Whereat they kept their counsel, and were still.

Sigurd's avenging force of ships is sighted early giving Helgi time to prepare his strategy. Once landed the invaders are immediately bettered in a minor skirmish before making defensive camp for the night by their 'beached

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[55] Manning, *ibid.*, p.70.

black ships'. Helgi returns home to watch beside his tearful then sleeping Gudrun, anxious to carry the imprint of her image with him 'through the dark of death' if that should be his fate.

With morning he is quick to maintain control of the situation by marching his men,

> To a smooth level sward, for fighting made,
> Between the gray bents and the leafy woods,
> A dancing-ground for maidens[,]

and await Sigurd's attack. Here he steps forward into the open successfully goading Sigurd into an impetuous single contest -'blind rage gat hold of him, | And he came at me, whirling his bright axe'. They clash, Helgi managing to deflect Sigurd's axe blow while his own axe

> clove clean through the angry face,
> Right to the brain; and, as I drew it back,
> He swayed, and fell, and his bronze armour rang
> Loudly; and from both armies came a shout
> Crying, "Sigurd is slain! Sigurd is slain!"
> One mourning and one joyous, while my men
> Stood round him prone, and marvelled at his strength,
> And no one feared him now.

A steady hand-to-hand slaughter between the opposing sides follows. 'So, all day long, the uncertain combat flowed,'[56] until at dusk they draw apart to consider the situation. Flosi, Sigurd's successor as leader, agrees to a truce, and Helgi joins him in mourning for Sigurd:

> Him I hated not,
> Nay, rather loved! Though he bore hate to me
> For Swinefell's spoiling, and for Gudrun's sake,
> [...] So for one prize
> Strove we, nor could we yield, but one must die:
> Whence lies he there. The gods have willed it so!

Flosi sees the futility of any further bloodshed:

> "Yea, one slim maid hath slain too many men.
> Well is she Gudrun called, unto men's hearts
> A snare and peril! What is in one face

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[56] Alfred Tennyson, 'Morte D'Arthur'. Compare with line 1, 'So all day long the noise of battle roll'd'.

That men should die for it?[57]

The two factions agree to an honourable peace.

It is in this exchange between Helgi and Flosi that Gudrun is first named. The role of Gudrun in the *Volsunga Saga* as a beautiful and dangerously subtle ill-fated Niblung, influential in the death of her Volsung husband Sigurd, is freely adapted by Manning to emphasise his interpretation of the Norse play upon rivalry, loyalty and sexual jealousy. Before the invading force departs, the recent antagonists combine in reverencing Sigurd's immortal soul with a traditional funeral rite. They

> build a pyre within his ship
> Heaped up with spoil, [...]
> And launch him, burning, on the eternal sea.

Gudrun, solitary, watches 'One burning ship drift over the sea's rim | Into the dark.'

With like, yet dissimilar, thoughts of loss Helgi reflects upon his situation as Flosi's departing sails drop below the horizon, taking with them his zest for voyaging and adventure. The lure of that life is strong, 'Yea, but look on love!', he claims in compensation. But that claim is ironic, being based on a misconception. For even although he has Gudrun secure in his possession:

> Was she not mine indeed,
> Now, whom mine arm had won? All mine! all mine!

and again, 'Mine! all mine! | All mine: and yet some shadow slipped from me', still Gudrun's heartache for Sigurd remains an insuperable barrier between them:

> But him she loved;
> And dreamed upon his face, remembering.

Manning's authorial cry from the heart, first voiced in *The Vigil*, is heard

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[57] Compare *Troilus and Cressida*, II.ii. Flosi's attitude to Gudrun is comparable with that of Hector to Helen.

again here through Helgi:

> I think no love is peace, and we but break
> Against each other; and our hands are vain
> To grasp what is worth holding; and our sense
> Too coarse a net to snare what no speech saith.
> We go alone through all our days, alone
> Even when all is given!

So Helgi, his ideal unfulfilled, finds solace in seafaring, aimlessly it is implied, 'Over blue windless seas, bare of all life,' in 'That deep, vast, desolating blue of sky | And tranquil waters', metaphoric for his psychological condition.

Despite all this disappointment Helgi's pragmatism sustains him against dejection, for even if his dream of love fulfilled has vanished, then never mind, 'dreams are winged to fly' he says, and after all, pride in possession of Gudrun stimulates tenacity of purpose - 'Will ye win? | Then must ye dare.'

Manning welcomes the opportunity to re-enter the lists against stereotyped religion by giving to Helgi a homily which explains, as climax to the elegy, that old campaigner's rationale. Sheltered within the household is a weakly, cerebral figure, who is an anathema to the sensual Helgi:

> a lean saint stalled
> Somewhere among my scullions, in the stead:
> A half-drowned rat we haled from out the sea,
> Who says God saved him! He stakes his poor life,
> Having not strength enough to lift mine axe,
> Against a greater glory.

This character, fearful of women's wiles, is anxiously celibate, leading an arid existence as preparation for the next life, unappreciative of the 'keen, sweet joy' of regeneration which 'whelms the world | In an immortal glory' wherefrom derives 'the hope, | The wonder, the desire' to aspire 'Beyond our mortal doom', all of which are the provender in this life of, in Helgi's mind, bounteous gods. Helgi's eulogy merges into a paean to Balder the Norse

deity he venerates above all others, the epitome of high endeavour. Manning leaves the reader to recognise in Balder the favourite of the gods, a god of light himself, a figure so comely that he sheds radiance around him, unequalled in Asgard for wisdom, of whom to see or hear is enough to adore him.[58] Helgi spurns any thought of 'dispraising' Balder's supremacy, defending too his own standards, in the avowal:

> Thee I will not curse,
> Nor life, nor women, nor the fool himself
> Who blinks weak eyes, and calls the glory vain.

The case put by Helgi is convincing, at the very least to himself. He approaches death acquiescent. The life he leaves palls in comparison with the one of his youth together with the prospect after death of rejuvenation into new adventures:

> a strong man will win through
> And cast up somewhere on another shore
> With his old lust for fighting.

At the close of a bountiful life rewarded from the standards he defends he asks finally that he be graced, like Sigurd, with a hero's farewell, his remains to be set adrift burning 'Over the rim of Ocean', while Gudrun watches.

Through 'Helgi of Lithend' Manning presents a credible glimpse into that remote dream-like Teutonic civilization fusing legend and history. He achieves this by means now emerging as inherent in his writing, an ability to exemplify, by expressing highly selective imagery drawn from characters and situations regarded traditionally as historically accurate and stated with a restraint implying an affinity with them which goes deeper than the words chosen. That is, one senses he knows more (like one living through the experiences) than he tells.

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[58] Balder's death and significance in Norse mythology are discussed in Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A study in magic and religion*, Chapter LXI, 'The Myth of Balder', pp.607-09. Matthew Arnold's *Balder Dead*, is another rendition of the myth.

This story is set in the transitional world between pagan and Christian beliefs. Consequently Manning gives some credit to personal motivations becoming disentangled from the will of intractable gods as evidenced in the honourable armistice between Helgi and Flosi following the death of Sigurd. Helgi too, after his own fashion, while always looking to the gods for his salvation still finds space to include worldly influences in his reasoning. Most appealing of Manning's characters is Gudrun. She is the long-suffering victim of male domination in which she is yet able to retain an inscrutable dignity. Her community shelters a Christian cast away, a source of irritation to Helgi, whose understated presence in the text suggests (correctly for that tentative period) rather than affirms, his significance in the trend toward more benevolent times. 'Theseus and Hippolyta' and 'Helgi of Lithend' together cover a recognisable growth in human nature and separated they bracket a group of short poems which consider consequences within that growth.

The remaining poetry in this first section of the anthology comprises fifteen short poems bracketed between 'Theseus and Hippolyta' and 'Helgi of Lithend'. Collectively they discuss mortality, narrowly at one level through individual concerns which either accept or resent the inevitability of death, and then broadly at a higher level through the promise of regeneration into immortality. Central to Manning's theme is his most successful poem 'Kore'. In mythology Kore, the maiden Persephone, daughter of Demeter goddess of the fruits and riches of the fields, was abducted by Hades into the Underworld from which he was prevailed upon to release her for part of every year. Manning's Kore is depicted honouring her annual obligation to return to Hades, a grievance occasioning the sorrowful Demeter's withdrawal of her bounteous favours from earth and the consequent approach of winter. The poem is reproduced here in full.

> Yea, she hath passed hereby, and blessed the sheaves,
> And the great garths, and stacks, and quiet farms,

And all the tawny and the crimson leaves.
Yea, she hath passed, with poppies in her arms,
Under the star of dusk, through stealing mist,
And blessed the earth, and gone, while no man wist.

With slow, reluctant feet, and weary eyes,
And eyelids heavy with the coming sleep,
With small breasts lifted up in stress of sighs,
She passed, as shadows pass, among the sheep;
While the earth dreamed, and only I was ware
Of that faint fragrance blown from her soft hair.

The land lay steeped in peace of silent dreams;
There was no sound amid the sacred boughs,
Nor any mournful music in her streams:
Only I saw the shadow on her brows,
Only I knew her for the yearly slain,
And wept; and weep until she come again.

Manning's perceptive critic, Richard Cody, praises the poem thus:

> "Kore" is, to say the least and in spite of its neglect by anthologists, the perfect anthology piece, *circa* 1910, both for its historical and its intrinsic interest.
>
> It is the sort of beautiful late Victorian poem that has had to be, in some sense, denied so that the ascendancy of the modernist poem could be affirmed. "Where do we go from Swinburne?" as Eliot cheerily said to Pound; or words to that effect. The answer was: "Follow me."[59]

Cody cogently argues for three ways, interactive, 'of identifying the interests of "Kore"', while at the same time enhancing one's regard for Manning's artistic calibre. He traces the inspiration for 'Kore' through the poetry of Robert Bridges whose reading, like Manning's, was steeped in Classical Greek poetry which influenced each of them 'to search for meters, stanzas and diction in English which could approach the perfection he found in lyric Greek'[60], and to Shakespearean associations; through Swinburne and other late Victorians as well as the major poets of English romanticism, practically all of whom utilised the mythology of Demeter and Persephone; thence thirdly to culminate in Sir James Frazer's evocation of the Homeric 'Hymn to Demeter' -

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[59] Richard Cody, *Newsletter of the Friends of the Amherst College Library*, double number, Vol.V, No.2 and Vol.VI, No.1 for Spring and Fall, 1977, n.p.

[60] *op.cit.*, n.p.

> The reasoning that satisfied Saint Paul and has brought comfort to untold thousands of sorrowing Christians, standing by the deathbed or the open grave of their loved ones, was good enough to pass muster with ancient pagans, when they too bowed their heads under the burden of grief, and, with the taper of life burning low in the socket, looked forward into the darkness of the unknown. Therefore we do no indignity to the myth of Demeter and Persephone - one of the few myths in which the sunshine and clarity of the Greek genius are crossed by the shadow and mystery of death - when we trace its origin to some of the most familiar, yet eternally affecting aspects of nature, to the melancholy gloom and decay of autumn and to the freshness, the brightness, and the verdure of spring.[61]

Returning from Frazer's eloquent excursus into poetic thought in which he distinguishes the importance of myths and rites in poetic expression, to Manning's 'Kore' once more, it is unclear whether the poem's narrator is Demeter or the poet. These alternatives, or their combination, strengthen the tone for if the goddess is speaking then she knows that immortality is assured albeit in a form subject to the mercy of the sportive pantheon she shares. However if the voice is that of the poet then, as a party to the human condition, he must rely on his faith to anticipate the promise of immortality and its joys. Thus an interpretation of belief, wide ranging, is written into the situation. The beautifully graded stanzas commence with a blessing given in passing, progress into regret heavy with fatigue, and conclude with the silence attending loss. 'Only I', the narrator's thrice declared lamentation, conceivably portraying divine and/or human status, delivered while standing forlorn and weeping over enforced separation and uncertain reunion or fulfilment as the case may be, encapsulates love whole-heartedly bestowed but hurtfully vulnerable.

The poem 'Canzone' in this group should be read in conjunction with 'Kore' as they complement each other most strongly in addressing the themes of loss and regeneration central to the volume. 'Canzone's' form is the

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[61] Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1993), [1890-1915], Chapter XLIV, pp. 398-99.

sestina, much favoured by the Provençal troubadours and by Dante and Petrarch. Exponents of the sestina in English include Pound and Eliot, but probably its most spectacular interpreter is Swinburne who uses an elaborate double form for his 'Complaint of Lisa'. But in this instance, whereas 'Kore' is pure Manning in its originality and economy of words and their application toward the conclusion - 'Only I knew her for the yearly slain, | And wept; and weep until she come again.'- his 'Canzone' is a freer statement showing evidence of secondary influences, notably suggesting Keats's 'Ode To Psyche' and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott'. The fact that 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' was much admired by the Pre-Raphaelites, being particularly the corner-stone of William Morris's poetic inspiration, who in turn was highly regarded by Manning, strengthens the proposition that these connecting poems largely influence Manning's comments here upon male and female susceptibilities.

Manning dedicated 'Canzone' to Dorothy Shakespear. Although the poem did not seem to arouse much passion in its dedicatee, it certainly did in Ezra Pound, her eventual favourite. As is sometimes the way between competitive writers, Pound responded to Manning's efforts with a sestina of his own called, 'Canzon: The Yearly Slain, Written in reply to Manning's "Kore"', and although Pound specifies 'Kore' rather than 'Canzone' as the progenitor of his own piece, and publication dates tend to confirm this[62], there is sufficient circumstantial evidence surrounding the composition of all three poems, written within a short space of time, to credit 'Canzone' as the stimulus of Pound's response. This contention arises from the sestina form Pound adopts for his reply which appears to mimic rather than foreshadow Manning's sestina, together with the female characterisation (broader in

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62 Manning's 'Kore' was first published as 'Persephone' in *The English Review* of December 1909. His 'Canzone', first published as 'Hecate', appeared in *The Spectator* on 12 March 1910. Later in 1910 he published both poems under their revised titles in *Poems*. Pound's 'Canzon: The Yearly Slain' first appeared in the January 1910 issue of *The English Review*.

'Canzone') linking Manning's two poems and contributing to Pound's foray against him, as well as the close literary and social interaction between the poets at that time heightened by their mutual, if differently motivated, regard for Dorothy Shakespear.

The *envois* concluding both sestinas reinforce these points. They read as follows, Manning's first:

> Go, thou, my song! Tell her, though weeping, yet
> Her face is mine: such joy have I in it
> I cannot shut the splendour from mine eyes.

then Pound's:

> Be sped, my Canzon, through the bitter air!
> To him who speaketh words as fair as these,
> Say that I also know the "Yearly Slain."

Each *envoi conforms* with its traditional sestina purpose of addressing the song itself without necessarily forming a part of the poem proper while the poet asserts a point of view to somebody unnamed. Their difference lies in their poetic feeling - each writer's emotional attitude towards what he says. For while Manning retains in his envoi the high level of admiration expressed throughout his poem for the female of whom he has 'grown | Amorous of her lips with kisses sweet, | For her deep eyes in their enchantment strong', Pound's *envoi* projects his 'Canzon' through a 'bitter' perspective to a rival whom he acknowledges measures up to his own poetic standards but cannot go unchallenged in pre-empting feeling for the '"Yearly Slain"', the love he quotes, so-named by Manning and dear to Pound's own heart. In other respects Pound states his theme with aggression as opposed to Manning's urbanity; he is possessive and effusive where Manning is emotionally restrained and detached, while in delivery is staccato where Manning is harmonic. As a result Manning's 'Canzone' is a more convincing composition appropriate to its theme.

The poem 'Eros Glittering' is located between 'Canzone' and 'Kore' in

this first half of the anthology. These three poems together form a trilogy unstated as such in the Contents but identifiable. 'Eros Glittering' embraces a brief two stanzas each comprising six long lines of complex metre uniform in each line grouped in rhyming couplets. Therein Eros is portrayed as a 'glittering' warrior, while Eros's armoury, awakening Love, is described as analogous with dawn in its disclosure of breaking light and brightening images, yet as a different dawn too, menacing, 'Ah! but not with peace', because those who try to resist Eros's power are 'as swimmers who drown'. Eros is implacable. His tenacity dazzles his victims. 'Glittering' he 'smites his foes in his wrath' and as master he cuts down all before him.

Interposed as it is between the other two poems, 'Eros Glittering' serves a specific purpose in its placement. This is as a foil. For while collectively the trilogy explores disconcerting aspects of inevitability, the central, rugged masculine essentially Manning, version of Eros is used to offset the tender appeal of the feminine Persephone legend in each of the bracketing poems. However the lengthy 'Eros Glittering' couplets disarm in their leisurely pace to impose another foil counter to their message by softening Eros's aggression in order to insinuate an even tone, appropriate to Manning's purpose of binding together the trilogy, like the slow middle movement of a simple ternary form sonata. To illustrate this 'slow movement' concept, the second couplet (flowing on smoothly from its predecessor) describing Love:

> Out of delicate dreams, out of a sleep, Love awakens, his eyes
> Filled with marvellous light as from the deep wells in the
> wakened skies[,]

ultimately evolves into the concluding couplet, describing Eros:

> Glittering through the storm cometh he then, rending all in his path,
> Thus the implacable lord, master of men, smites his foes in his
> wrath[,]

retaining therein the same measured metre and ostensibly simple vocabulary which lightly cloaks the rage sharply contrasted against the amiable opening.

'Eros Glittering' is thus heavily disguised rhetorical irony.

Most of the remaining poems in this section of the volume introduce only minor variations on the main themes already identified, of loss and recovery, fatalism and optimism. Their quantity and reiterative Decadent feeling obscure the quality of the poems already discussed. At the same time they do continue to display Manning's dexterity with prosody. Considered collectively they reproduce that languorous repetitive streak characteristic of the *fin de siècle* poetry of The Rhymers' Club, with which Manning was familiar through the posthumous influence of Lionel Johnson. Lines from Manning's 'The Soul of Man' -

> But softer than love, and deeper than longing
> Are the sweet, frail voices of drifting ghosts;
> In the soul of man they are floating, thronging
> As wind-blown petals, pale, flickering hosts[,]

are typical of this group of poems. His continued use of these effects years after they had lost their limited appeal was detrimental to his poetic development, and to popular and critical approbation. However there are a few more poems, exceptional for their individuality, which deserve attention.

The first of these is 'A.C.S.', the initials and their subtitle, '*April 10th*, 1909', indicating that the poem commemorates the life and death of Algernon Charles Swinburne. In the light of the above evaluation one might expect Manning's elegy on Swinburne to be maudlin or frothy, but it was not his nature to express nearness and dearness with saccharine sentiment. 'A.C.S' is not outstanding poetry. Rather, its merit lies in the sense of restraint Manning adopts to show his sorrow through loss. The season of spring is the emphatic setting of this poem. Manning lifts his favoured image of 'the yearly slain' from its usual autumn connotations into this revised spring context in the line 'Spring hath slain the lord of Spring', inverting the normal spring metaphor of new life and regeneration into one of mortality, while reminding the reader, through suggestion, that Swinburne

frequently invoked spring in his own writing, most famously, one proposes, in 'the hounds of spring' from the chorus of his *Atalanta in Calydon*. By pointing out that spring is now the season of Swinburne's death, Manning has enlisted the traditional characteristics of that season to entrap bittersweet Swinburne memories.

A significant strain in Manning's writing attempts a union of the lyric with the mystical, usually through human agency, not, as in the case of this next poem, through animal imagery. Thus 'To A Bush-baby' offers another dimension to Manning's musing by caricaturing human form and sensibility with that of a small and fearful primate. The creature's

> eyes that seem
> Troubled, by some pain obscure,
> As though life were but a dream,
> Nothing sure[,]

mirror man's vexation and perplexity with life's tedium. But more than this, the poem implies, just as the bush-baby risks easy injury so the survival of all life is frought with peril, even man's, poignantly so by being nearest in evolution to the primates. In the statement,

> Little hands that cling to me,
> Helpless as mine own, and weak,
> What in this world's mystery
> Do we seek?

the primate and the human each recognises that all is not well with their separate conditions and they cling together for mutual support. Although the analogy and its implications might not have been new even in Manning's day, the message lives on forcefully from the first decade of the twentieth century through its particular relevance to environmental disasters common into the twentyfirst century's first decade.

Finally attention rests on a Petrarchan sonnet entitled 'Still Life'. Nothing else like it exists in Manning's canon. It is reproduced in full:

> Pale globes of fragrant ripeness, amber grapes
> And purple, on a silver dish; a glass

Of wine, in which light glows, and fires to pass
Staining the damask, and in dance escapes;
Two Venice goblets wrought in graceful shapes;
A bowl of velvet pansies, wherein mass
Blues, mauves, and purples; plumes of meadow-grass;
And one ripe pomegranate, that splits and gapes,
Protruding ruby seeds; a feast for eyes
Better than all those topaz, beryl fruits
Aladdin saw and coveted: these call,
To minds contented and in leisure wise,
Visions of blossoming boughs, and mossy roots,
And peaches ripening on a sunny wall.

The sonnet reads like the close description of an actual seventeenth century Dutch master's still-life painting which Manning surely must have seen. It is also a faithful interpretation of the intentions of those still-life artists. They often chose the humblest of objects which receive their meaning by association with human uses and are treated as reverently as if they were sacramentals. The objects are isolated as profoundly interesting in themselves while their representation is made both scientific and poetic exercises in the revelation of their functions and the beauties of light. Arrangements include glass and silver goblets, game, fruit, flowers, silver salvers, fine porcelain and pottery on light-absorbing rich fabrics. Glossy transparent partly filled goblets gleam like night skies with galaxies of sparklets and light sources, contrasting with the duller highlights that edge dishes and fruit. These masterpieces arose in an age which must have taken pleasure in the infinite variety of the play of light in the small universe as well as the large. Theirs was not dull imitation but the revelation of what can be seen if the eye will learn to see it. Manning demonstrates in this showpiece sonnet his compatibility with the genre and his ability to use it faithfully. In addition he evokes the shapes, smells and colours of Keats's autumn by using alliterative labial consonants culminating in the luscious 'peaches ripening on a sunny wall'.

The remaining twenty-two poems in this volume are collected under the subtitle 'Les Heures Isolées'. It is this collection which carries the epigraph quoted previously in translation at page ii above, part of which

states, 'Every man owes himself his own privacy', and is seen in this thesis as epitomising Manning's hubris. The poems are all short in length and narrow in range, confining themselves to statements which characterise their writer as someone lackadaisical, who addresses some thoughts to a love figured vaguely and whose 'signs' are 'Floating, fragile, drifting things!'. Looked at as self-parodies they constitute Manning's possibly most ironic work in that they wilfully invade 'his own privacy', the condition stoutly defended by him against intrusion both before and after the compilation of this sequence.

The collection begins and ends with two more Petrarchan sonnets, neither of which attains the standard of 'Still Life'. The first of them is 'The Pool', which body of water is equated with the poet's soul, 'grown so sweet|With [that recurring word] fragile memories'. A little further on another poem, 'Butterflies', equates souls with 'Fluttering, haphazard things'. This languid tone continues throughout the collection to probably the inevitability of 'Death and Nature', the final Petrarchan sonnet. Its octave enumerates the forces of nature which will continue unremitting after the poet's death while the sestet directs someone he favours to,

> Seek my soul in these;
> I am a part of them; and they will keep
> Perchance the music which I wrought with tears.
> When the moon shines above the silent trees
> Your eyes shall see me; and when soft as sleep
> Come murmurs of the rain, ah, bend your ears!

These poems equate with the style of the *maladie fin de siècle* period in which Manning lived (mostly in its aftermath), absorbed opinions and wrote.

Poems is clearly separated into two parts. The first of these covers an ambitious and vigorous exposition on mortality whereas the second, under the subtitle 'Les Heures Isolées', is a collective expression of self-indulgence. While only some poems in the first division repeat the *maladie fin de siècle* from the Decadent period of the late nineteenth century, all

of them in the second part imitate the Decadents to the general disadvantage of the book. What saves 'Les Heures Isolées' from the ordinary is its sincerity. T S Eliot writing in another context locates the phenomenon of what is here called self-indulgence to specific times during the evolution of literature when,

> a late age of poetry may be consciously impotent to compete with its distinguished ancestry. We meet poets of this kind at the end of any age, poets with a sense of the past only [...] as verse develops, in the hands of one poet after another, it tends from monotony to variety, from simplicity to complexity; as it declines, it tends towards monotony again, though it may perpetuate the formal structure to which genius gave life and meaning.[63]

Noteworthy in *Poems* is the regard Manning shows for perpetuating the 'formal structure to which genius gave life and meaning'. He does this by displaying a command of prosody which would have done credit to Swinburne. Eliot writes of 'the erudite complexities of Swinburnian metre'[64] which, when once perceived, diminish Swinburne's poetic effect. Similarly, the claim is made here that Manning's delight in stretching poetic form in many directions at the expense of feeling, while labouring on with the burden of emotion, infiltrates, and therefore weakens, much of his poetry. A brief account of Eliot's explanation of the difference between poetic feeling and emotion, taken from another of his essays, bears relevance to Manning's turn of self-indulgence.

To Eliot 'The emotion of art is impersonal.'[65] He explains this declaration in:

> It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting. His particular emotions may be simple, or crude, or flat. The emotion in his poetry will be a very complex thing, but not with the complexity of the emotions

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[63] Frank Kermode (Ed.), *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, 'What is a Classic?', (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp.119-20.

[64] *op.cit.*, 'Reflections on *Vers Libre*', p.33.

[65] *op.cit.*, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', pp.43-44.

> of people who have very complex or unusual emotions in life. One error, in fact, of eccentricity in poetry is to seek for new human emotions to express; and in this search for novelty in the wrong place it discovers the perverse. The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all.

Furthermore, Eliot adds, emotions a poet has never experienced are just as useful to him in his craft as those familiar to him, and hence:

> There is a great deal, in the writing of poetry, which must be conscious and deliberate. In fact, the bad poet is usually unconscious where he ought to be conscious, and conscious where he ought to be unconscious. Both errors tend to make him 'personal'. Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.

Clearly a thorough assessment of Swinburne's poetry would extend beyond the limits of Eliot's discourse on literary purity which is applied here to show that Manning's poetry, in its passing regard for Swinburne, lacks feeling when it digresses toward the 'personal' in the manner Eliot defines above.

Warfare is as an important link in Manning's writing. The subject is introduced in the first of his long narrative poems as significant in Brunhild's lifetime background to her final hours; is continued in 'Theseus and Hippolyta' as governing the entire action of that poem; and is the mainstay of Helgi's life in 'Helgi of Lithend'. Included in the publication of *Eidola* are the short poems Manning wrote resulting from his own wartime experiences, and finally *The Middle Parts of Fortune* is his prose exposition on war.

iii. 1917: *Eidola*

'Eidola' is a Greek word which translates in English into a range of

derivatives which provide a great play upon meanings. The range includes phantoms, apparitions, images and idols. Its most celebrated use in English literature is by Francis Bacon. His *Novum Organum* investigates the false notion or erroneous way of looking at things to which the mind is prone, characterised by him in four alternatives organised under 'Idols of the Mind'(i. 39), as 'Idols' of the Tribe (due to the nature of man's understanding), 'Idols' of the Den or Cave (due to personal causes), 'Idols' of the Forum (due to the influence of words or phrases) and 'Idols' of the Theatre (due to misconceptions of philosophic system or demonstration). Bacon's purpose was to rid the mind as far as possible from its intellectual defects by discrediting the methods of enquiry hitherto used and to encourage the hope that some better procedure lay ready for adoption. Without doubt Manning was familiar with Bacon's works through Galton's extensive reading list, and would have drawn the theme for this volume of his poems from his knowledge of Bacon and from Epicurus, also on his reading list, who worked out an explanation for the physical origin of images.

Epicurus taught that the perception of physical objects is transmitted by eidola, extremely fine clouds of atoms given off from the surface of objects in the physical world. Normally an eidolon proceeding from the surface of an object without interruption activates the soul-atoms of the perceiver in the sense-organs, and the soul-atoms by their motion somehow picture the characteristics of the object. The picture is retained in the mind as a memory. Delusions occur when eidola, rendered imperfect in their flow, cause images to form which look authentic but hinder man's perception. Thus Epicurus strove to show the validity of self-perception in that, although one's 'self' can be wrong, self-perception can be improved by philosophy. Hence in *Eidola* Manning sets himself the task of examining and using perception, or the comparison of ideas, in order to elicit truth.

Like *Poems*, *Eidola* comprises two distinct sections although in this case the sections are not designated separately. The first group of nineteen poems, nearly half of the book's contents, draws its inspiration from Manning's war-time experiences. Based upon this small collection a few critics have acknowledged Manning as a 'war poet' of status with the ability to articulate the extreme physical and mental suffering and moral questioning unleashed at that time, and some fewer anthologists have included excerpts in their compilations of outstanding war poetry. The second group of twenty-five poems, written prior to the first group but included in order to fill out the publication, mostly repeats the deficiencies of *Poems* in its repetition of late nineteenth century clichés, and as a result diminishes the volume's overall impact. Phantoms or apparitions, as specified in the title, are used as the vehicles for communicating various relationships and irreconcilabilities between life and after-life.

Appropriately as an introduction, 'The Choosers', first of the war poems, exploits this spectral sense broadly by treating not only traditional phantoms but also human life as illusory, '*Men are but shadows, but a vain breath!*' (Manning's italics), because their death is imminent. 'The Choosers' setting is a recruits' training camp hut at night, the occupants being asleep except for one of their number who observes mystical figures, 'bright-mailed choosers of the dead', moving among the sleeping soldiers and marking down those destined to be killed in battle. Exercising acute prescience and using admirable word economy Manning, early on in the wartime experience, recognises in these sleeping victims the greatness with which posterity will invest them -

> Shadowy, swathed in their blankets,
> As sleep, in hewn sepulchral caves,
> Egypt's and Asia's kings.

Though superficially they appear nondescript and petty he makes them seem majestic, exotic and historic. Another poem 'Relieved' records the soldiers'

subjugation to the drudgery of military routine -

> We are weary and silent,
> There is only the rhythm of marching feet;
> Tho' we move tranced, we keep it
> As clock-work toys.

They are sensitive to the disruption resulting from their sudden relocation abroad into dire conditions and strange places - 'We know not the world in which we move, [...] Our sense floats out from us, delicately apprehensive,'. The neighbouring poems, 'Reaction' and 'The Old Calvary', register alien sights which jar upon them, country and city bred men alike, as they occupy billets in 'great Gothic barns, | With curious curved beams arching, as in shadowy aisles;' and file past a damaged and displaced roadside calvary figuring a 'mutilated trunk, | Worn, and gray' with,

> the frail, lean form,
> The shrunken flanks,
> That knew more suffering than held
> The agonies of Laocoon.

Interpretable therein is Manning's metaphoric reference to the common sight of shattered and decaying bodies lying about the battlefield described by him later in 'Bois De Mametz' -

> Heavy the clay upon our lips,
> The gray rats fear us not, but pass quickly, sated,
> Over prone trunks, rent limbs, dead faces,
> That are ashen under the moon.[66]

Occasional encounters with calvarys are mentioned in his war novel *The Middle Parts of Fortune*. On one such, after the whole battalion has been paraded in a village main street for their Colonel's inspection, in which the Colonel's worth is as much under scrutiny by the men as theirs is by him, with the conclusion that,

> They were his men all right, if he handled them well, that was settled when once they had looked into the just, merciless face: and the companies marched off to their drills, and the specialists to their duties, well aware that presently there would be another big killing of men. They marched out of the village, past the stone calvary at the end of it, and men who had known all the sins of the world, lifted, to the agony of the

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[66] Manning, *Eidola*, p.19.

> figure on the cross, eyes that had probed and understood the mystery of suffering.[67]

Manning's soldiers, in their engagement with warfare, scrape from their boots 'the mud | That is half human'; in the dugouts and trenches they kill the lice infesting their clothes, and after battle their 'eye-balls have been seared with fire.' In the support area to the front line they gather together in estaminets 'roaring' their songs. The imagery in these three poems ranges widely, communicating the confusion, endurance and horror new in their lives. As a means of self-defence against these stresses the soldiery develop an over-riding panacea - 'But each man is alone in this multitude; [...] Only we have our secret thoughts.'

Harassment from artillery bombardment was a form of attrition used constantly in that static war. The disturbing effect induced upon its victims is well conveyed in 'The Guns',

> Menace, hidden, but pulsing in the air of night:
> Then a throbbing thunder, split and seared
> With the scarlet flashes of innumerable shells,
> And against it, suddenly, a shell closer;
> A purr that changes to a whine
> Like a beast of prey that has missed its kill,
> And again, closer.

Years later, in his war novel, Manning restated the same point more forcefully -

> All the following day they were heavily shelled, and their own guns developed a terrific intensity of fire.
> 'There's too much fuckin' artillery in this bloody war,' said Jakes irritably, as though they had all failed to appreciate the fact. 'You don't get no sleep.'[68]

In sharp contrast however, the remaining two stanzas of 'The Guns' do not anticipate that later worldly posture. Instead these soldiers withdraw into the solace of a dream situation among apparitions, to an inner silence within

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[67] Manning, *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, [1929], (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), p.129

[68] *op. cit.*, p.222.

'the thunder of the guns' where the soul 'groweth still' and is unafraid, where the shapes of warring angels replace the gunfire and are identified as the creatures of the soul's own lusts which reduce the hostilities to a personal struggle and thus, recast as torments originating within their own minds, free them from the immediacy of the bombardment's lethal threat.

There follow, scattered in the anthology, four poems, 'The Sign', 'Wind', 'Bois De Mametz' and 'Leaves', which are discussed here as a quartet through the belief that they commonly support a view that nature's constancy will prevail over war's destructive outcome. Within that grouping there are differing treaments of the nature metaphor. The eponymous 'sign' manifests itself to one member of a troop of soldiers sheltering in a wood of beech trees. He sees, 'One bough of clear promise | Across the moon', and construes this as his link with God Who, in the midst of

> This implacable fury and torment of men,
> As a thing insensate and vain:

conveys the message to him -

> And the stillness hath said unto me,
> Over the tumult of sounds and shaken flame,
> Out of the terrible beauty of wrath,

that '*I* [God] *alone am eternal.*' Later, in *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, Manning restates that experience, less piously, in prose. Therein Private Bourne, Manning's alter ego in the novel, is temporarily encamped with his company in a wood just short of the front line prior to re-engagement there. At night on hearing 'a heavy lumbering and clanking' noise they rush out of their tents expecting to experience their first sight of tanks, only to be disappointed by the appearance of a caterpillar tractor 'come up to move a big gun to or from its lair'. Then,

> As Bourne turned back with the others, he looked up to a clear patch of sky, and saw the sharp crescent of the moon, floating there like a boat. A bough threw a mesh of fine twigs over its silver, and at that loveliness he caught up his breath, almost

in a sob.[69]

'Wind' and 'Leaves', on the other hand, momentarily introduce, in disarming guise, a playground battlefield through the observed interaction of wind and falling leaves. Although these natural effects are an extrinsically, if desperately, conceived happy reminder of childhood frolics and kittens' games, the reality is of course bittersweet. For on deeper reflection, heard in the wind 'the souls of slain men are singing exultant' at their release from the suffering their surviving comrades yet endure while, like leaves 'Stript [from] the great trees' by the shock of shellfire to 'Flicker in falling, like waifs', men expendable still fall, life flickers and humanity dies.

These three poems again demonstrate the strengths consistent in Manning's poetry; his masterly verbal economy, his hermeneutical approach to the concept of God through his search for and interpretation of spiritual truth, his skilled use of irony and metaphor, and his anxiety to pinpoint emotional sources. Unlike the way 'The Sign' does, 'Wind' and 'Leaves' stop short of invoking God. By so doing they keep undiminished the vigour and purpose of 'The Sign' but through understatement in themselves add freshness and power to the sustained metaphor they carry forward.

The fourth member of the quartet, 'Bois De Mametz', is Manning's longest war poem comprising sixty-eight lines and virtually summarizes the other three. Perhaps predictably, given the above thematic outline, it also addresses Demeter and recalls Persephone and the yearly slain, and introduces a pagan slant to the musing. Mametz Wood was the location of intense fighting during the Somme offensive of July 1916 and 'Bois De Mametz' was

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[69] *op. cit.*, p.157.

first published as 'Bois De Mametz: August 16' in *The Quest: A Quarterly Review*, edited by G.R.S. Mead.[70] Revisions for the *Eidola* version comprise several punctuation changes, five word substitutions (including a possible printer's error where 'whole' is replaced by 'who') and significant stanza restructuring, not all of which necessarily improve upon the poem's original form. The conclusion is somewhat problematical too as a component of the quartet in that it disturbs the group's symbolic balance and common premise of an absolute trust in nature. More tolerantly, it may be seen as exploring poetic alternatives. Whichever of these interpretations is preferred the conclusion reveals Demeter as omniscient,

> wisely silent,
> With subtile and inviolate eyes,
> [...]
> Knowing us from the matter of our lives.

Through Demeter it is not the leaves but the wind, 'Whose passage the leaves shadoweth', which is seen as emblematic of these men, and at this time through Demeter's qualified withdrawal from this scene of carnage, the wind is devoid from nature's bounty. Therefore the laconic last line standing in isolation - 'There are no leaves now in thy woods, Mametz', is a plaintive testimony to the gaunt shell shattered remains of the once flourishing woodlands and asserts that life, deprived of its proclaimants the leaves, is in jeopardy. Again in *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, Manning's prose reproduces the devastation of the same situation, literal and metaphoric:

> One's sensibility seemed to grow finer, more acute, while at the same time it became somewhat distorted. In the distance a star-shell would rise, and as its light dilated, wavered, and failed, one saw against it the shattered trunks and boughs of trees, lunatic arms uplifted in imprecation, and as though petrified in a moment of agony. The communication-trench was deep, and one looked up out of it to a now tranquil sky, against which the same stark boughs were partly visible.[71]

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[70] 19022 Private F. Manning, *VIIth K.S.L.I.*, 'Bois De Mametz: August 16', *The Quest*, Vol.VIII, Nos. 1-4, (October, 1916, to July, 1917), pp.333-35.

[71] Manning, *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, p.160.

With those philosophical outpourings behind him it is noticeable that most of Manning's remaining war poems become more objective. Among them 'A Shell', in just half a dozen curt lines, stands out as a flash of Modernist comprehension -

> Here we are all, naked as Greeks,
> Killing the lice in our shirts:
> Suddenly the air is torn asunder,
> Ripped as coarse silk,
> Then a dull thud. . . .
> We are all squatting.

This composition, in the Imagists' style, must have been the first-fruit which prompted Richard Aldington's 'whoop of joy' in welcoming Manning to the ranks of Modernity. All of the elements of this marvellously compact poem are expanded upon in a long paragraph at page 156 of *The Middle Parts of Fortune*:

> After they had smoked for a while, Glazier took his tunic and shirt off, and began to hunt for lice. One after another they all followed his example, stripping themselves of trousers, underpants and even socks, until the tent held nothing but naked men. They would take a candle, or a lighted match, and pass it along the seams of their trousers, hoping that the flame would destroy the eggs. A hurricane lamp hung by a nail on the tent-pole, and after it was lighted they still continued the scrupulous search, its light falling on white shoulders studiously rounded as they bent over the task. They were completely absorbed in it, when the air was ripped up with a wailing sigh, and there was a muffled explosion in the field behind them. They stopped, listening intently, and looking at each other. Another shell, whining precipitately, passed overhead to end with a louder explosion in some fields beyond the little wood, and well over the lower road. Then there was silence. They sighed and moved.[72]

Imagism is a subject for study in its own right 'riddled with paradox [...] and seemingly conflicting definitions'[73], but a few rules, drawn up for the Imagists' own-satisfaction and enumerated by F.S. Flint in 1913, suffice to show here that Manning's poem meets their criteria:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing," whether subjective or

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[72] cf. Isaac Rosenberg's two poems, 'Louse Hunting' and 'The Immortals'.

[73] Peter Jones (Ed.), *Imagist Poetry*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972) p.13.

> objective.
> 2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation.
> 3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.[74]

It is not uncommon for literary critics to manufacture propinquities between their favoured writers and other writers whose attributes are seen as desirable in association. A case in point and concerning the Imagists themselves is that of Harriet Monroe, as editor of *Poetry* championing their cause, who zealously labelled Emily Dickinson an 'unconscious and uncatalogued *Imagiste*'[75]. Despite such whimsicalities it can be profitable to explore likely relationships and it is considered appropriate here, in the interest of establishing a possible link between Manning and Imagism, to speculate on his further dealings with Ezra Pound.

Both Pound and Aldington helped found the Imagist movement *c.* 1910, at a time when Pound and Manning were in close communication. It is feasible to expect that some discussion between the latter two on current developments in poetry, with Imagism figuring therein, could have taken place then, and although Manning did not respond publicly to the new poetic form its substance could have remained in the recesses of his scholarly mind, to emerge finally with the Somme conflict in 1916, in a well developed example, as a medium ideally suited to interpret the moods suffered in that tumult. Earlier during negotiations between Manning and Pound over their proposed joint venture, *The Hellenist*, Manning assents to the possible inclusion of '*vers libre* and *imagiste* pieces':

> I quite appreciate your reasons for wishing to retain the position of a free-lance; but they probably apply to all of us. The only reason that weighs against them is the possibility of producing some really good work in comparative freedom. Too

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74 Jones. p.129.

75 Harriet Monroe, 'The Single Hound', *Poetry*, 1914.

> definite a programme would be a mistake for that reason. I should accept *vers libre* and *imagiste* pieces; it seems to me that they may be judged by the same standards as other modes, as far as essentials go; the means of expression are only valuable in relation to the completeness of the expression. The question is, does a thing produce the desired effect; and 'by what means' is a secondary consideration.[76]

As well too as embracing Imagist criteria 'A Shell' identifies elements of shock and crisis central to Modernist writing.

'The Face' penetrates further into Modernist territory. This time Manning's apparition is firstly the face of a youth terror stricken but determined to hide his fear, followed by that of the same face smashed in battle,

> Out of the smoke of men's wrath,
> The red mist of anger,
> Suddenly,
> As a wraith of sleep,
> A boy's face, white and tense,
> Convulsed with terror and hate,
> The lips trembling. . . .
>
> Then a red smear, falling. . . .
> I thrust aside the cloud, as it were tangible,
> Blinded with a mist of blood.
> The face cometh again
> As a wraith of sleep:
> A boy's face delicate and blonde,
> The very mask of God,
> Broken.

Only the usage of the archaic form 'cometh' betrays a backward glance to a lifetime of nineteenth century influences in an otherwise Modernist break through. As has been shown with 'The Guns', so too with 'The Face', Manning draws upon the long-stored emotion and memory of the events which originally inspired those compositions when he comes to write his novel, but with the difference that his expression is unfettered. Witness the following extract in which the novel's three main characters, Bourne with his comrades Shem and Martlow, assembled in a front-line trench as part of an attacking force, prepare to climb out 'over the top' and charge across no-man's-land in the

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[76] Pound collection, letter dated 13 March, 1914.

face of withering enemy gun fire. The consequences are inevitable:

> 'Are you all right, kid?' Bourne managed to ask in a fairly steady voice; and Martlow only gave a brief affirmative nod. [...] The noise of the shells increased to a hurricane fury. There was at last a sudden movement with some purpose behind it. The men began to fix bayonets. Someone thrust a mug into Shem's hands. ' Three men. Don't spill the bloody stuff, you won't get no more.' Shem drank some of the rum and passed it to Bourne. 'Take all you want, kid,' said Bourne to Martlow; 'I don't care whether I have any or not.' 'Don't want much,' said Martlow, after drinking a good swig. 'It makes you thirsty, but it warms you up a bit.' Bourne emptied the mug, and handed it back to Jakes to fill again and pass to another man. It had roused him a little. 'It'll soon be over, now,' whispered Martlow. [...] They shook hands, the three among themselves and then with others near them. Good luck, chum. Good luck. Good luck. He felt his heart thumping at first. And then, almost surprised at the lack of effort which it needed, he moved towards the ladder.[...]
>
> Martlow was perhaps a couple of yards in front of Bourne, when he swayed a little, his knees collapsed under him, and he pitched forward on to his face, his feet kicking and his whole body convulsive for a moment. Bourne flung himself down beside him, and, putting his arms round his body, lifted him, calling him. 'Kid! You're all right, kid?' he cried eagerly. He was all right. As Bourne lifted the limp body, the boy's hat came off, showing half the back of his skull shattered where the bullet had come through it; and a little blood welled out on to Bourne's sleeve and the knee of his trousers. He was all right;[...]
>
> Bourne struggled forward again, panting, and muttering in a suffocated voice. 'Kill the buggers! Kill the bloody fucking swine! Kill them!' All the filth and ordure he had ever heard came from between his clenched teeth; but his speech was thick and difficult. In a scuffle immediately afterward a Hun went for Minton, and Bourne got him with the bayonet, under the ribs near the liver, and then, unable to wrench the bayonet out again, pulled the trigger, and it came away easily enough. 'Kill the buggers!' he muttered thickly.[77]

In the time between writing 'The Face' in 1916 and its above obvious derivative in 1929 Manning has experienced immense intellectual development. This new writing may not be poetry but it is, at least, the prose of a poet, by which is meant the attention to thought and expression which characterises Manning's poetry is continued in his prose.

Descriptions of the trenches in which the troops of the Western Front sheltered and fought throughout the war are numerous and familiar. Manning

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[77] Manning, *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, pp.212-17.

adds freshness to the subject with his usual clarity, conciseness, observation and originality in his descriptive poem 'The Trenches'. In present-day parlance he uses a cinematographic effect to scan in panoramic detail the desolation firstly at ground level,

> Endless lanes sunken in the clay,
> Bays, and traverses, fringed with wasted herbage,
> Seed-pods of blue scabious, and some lingering blooms;

then pan skyward, 'And the sky, seen as from a well, | Brilliant with frosty stars'; then down again to the dugouts burrowed into the trench walls, 'Here a shaft, slanting, and below | A dusty and flickering light from one feeble candle', just sufficient to illuminate the occupants 'prone [ominous in conjunction with its repetition a stanza later] figures sleeping uneasily, | Murmuring' and others who cannot sleep,

> With faces as impassive as masks,
> Bright, feverish eyes, and drawn lips,
> Sad, pitiless, terrible faces,
> Each an incarnate curse.

Above ground once more he focuses narrowly on 'a helmeted sentry' at his post, who surveys 'with indifferent eyes [the scene being altogether familiar to him] the blasted and torn land' peopled with human bodies 'stiff prone forms, stupidly rigid | As tho' they had not been men' or 'strewn | In bloody fragments'. Manning's observation then merges into reflection upon all of the highly prized sensations and expectations which lately had quickened those bodies. Meanwhile the sentry, as imperturbable and methodical as the rats and crows nearby devouring their carrion, 'moves not, searching| Night for menace with weary eyes.'

The remaining six poems which complete Manning's war collection record other extracts from his experiences. One of them, 'Transport', provides a momentary relief from the war's stress. It describes his encounter with a mule supply train, an event no doubt quite common to troops moving in the communication corridors behind the front line. -In earlier slight references to his childhood in Australia Manning mentions one of his few pleasures, a

delight in horse riding, transformed in adulthood to following racing form and punting within his modest means. Among his surviving documents are meticulously drawn up lists naming race horses and amounts wagered against them. Manning's admiration for horses is transferred to Bourne in *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, who sees pompous staff officers assembling to observe his brigade on manoeuvres:

> Presently arrived magnificent people on horseback, glancing superciliously at the less fortunate members of their species whom necessity compelled to walk. Bourne, who loved horses, had seen nothing for months but mules, Rosinante [the name from Cervantes given by Bourne to the old mare which hauled the company Lewis-gun cart], some sorry hacks ridden by their officers, and a few lusty percherons threshing corn on a kind of tread-mill outside a French farm. The sight of these daintily-stepping animals, with a sheen on their smooth hides, gave him a thrill of pleasure. He was less favourably impressed by some of the riders.
> 'That bugger will give his horse a sore back before the day is out,' he said, as one of the great men cantered by importantly.[78]

In 'Transport', Manning cannot resist the opportunity to relive his childhood fondness by comparing the sturdy and brutish mules against the dashing mounts of two staff officers passing them, and to draw from his Classical reading a reference to equestrian ideals:

> Such as Oenetia bred;
> Beautiful as the horses of Hippolytus
> Carven on some antique frieze.

Other compositons return to introspection. Enclosed between the opening statement 'I am alone:' and the closing one, 'Fight for your own dreams, you.', is the poem titled in Greek 'autarkeia' ['self-sufficiency']. Those two statements emit a note of belligerence unusual for Manning which the intervening seventeen lines do not sustain but which instead nominate several treasured physical and spiritual forms embodying his ideals. The cataloguing of those ideals channels his feelings into the misanthropic -

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[78] Manning, *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, p.164.

'for these I fight, | For mine own self'.[79] Extensive application of enjambement concentrates attention on the link between his ideals and his prodigality in preparedness to sacrifice his life, 'a mere breath in the air', so that his ideals mingle with 'earth, and dreams, and God' and become 'being | In them the master of all these in me, | Perfected thus.' The poem is a more complicated and elevated version of the cynicism and veiled anger expressed in A E Housman's,

> Life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose;
> But young men think it is, and we were young.

By contrast the eight stanza poem 'Now' displays a more philanthropic regard by Manning for those he names in his Preface to *The Middle Parts of Fortune* as 'the anonymous ranks', while retaining from 'autarkeia' the same streak of prodigality. He praises comradeship for its generosity, inter-dependability, nobility and bravado through the attitude, reminiscent of many in the generation preceding Manning's, of all the sadness of an unwilling surrender to human destiny. In the estimate of some sceptics in the previous generation who endorsed that sentiment and were hostile to Victorian ideals, intellectual despair was very near. The Epicurean aesthetic seemed to them the only course to adopt as proof against the repose others had found in, for example, the particular doubts raised in Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and Robert Browning's *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*. There are places in 'Now' where the wording recalls Edward Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyát of Omar Khayyám*, a recollection strengthened through their shared sense of *carpe diem* coupled with a preference for values which in 'Now' reject 'the parsimony of peace' for the option to 'play with life as with a gamester' under the pervading wartime threat of life's swift extinction.

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[79] The feelings expressed here bear an affinity with W.B. Yeats's poem, 'An Irish Airman Forsees His Death.'

'Grotesque' is the last example of Manning's war poetry to be discussed. This poem, like 'A Shell', applies Imagism's confrontational, hard, clear and instantaneous observation, and is Modernist like 'The Face' in its form and style which accord with contemporary appeal. Attention is gripped from the first line, 'These are the damned circles Dante trod', referring to the successive circles of torment envisaged in the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, which probably provides as close an analogy as anyone has ever given to convey the suffering in war torn France and Belgium. Bitterness motivates the choice of every word selected to describe the general distress, 'terrible in hopelessness', felt by all those engulfed in the conflict and culminating in patriotism lampooned. The terse title 'Grotesque' introduces the monstrosity of the situation ridiculed in the poem itself which climaxes and epitomises many of the others collected in this section of *Eidola*.

By the time Manning entered the war late in 1916 his generation, which had backed into the conflict with its eyes set on more aesthetic scenes, came to have its vision brutally radicalised. Even so Manning, like Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918), stands apart from most other war poets who also arrived at this truth, in that while they all recognise and record the stark realities resulting from the scheming and blunders behind the conflict, he chooses not to apportion blame or point an accusatory finger. Throughout his small but eloquent corpus he maintains two stances expressing in turns his disgust with the degradation inflicted on mankind and his respect for mankind's ability to sublimate itself from those depths. The voices he adopts to explain those stances are the one of aesthetic values inherited from his largely nineteenth century scholarship and the other of contemporary expression learned late from keen observation sharpened by new crises.

The aestheticism he upholds is well illustrated in the two groupings put together above, firstly of 'The Sign', 'Wind', 'Bois de Mametz' and

'Leaves', and then of 'autarkeia' and 'Now'. Contrary to much of Manning's other poetry they are not tired old regurgitations of nineteenth century disenchantment with Victorian standards. They represent a late, brief and unique reflowering of aesthetic perception projecting itself into a hitherto inapprehensible context, that is, a world war. That these poems have eluded public recognition is not so much an indictment of their quality as their poor promotion in the first place and later, a demonstration of public resistance to revisit the era they imitate. The other voice announces Manning's brush with Modernism.

The break from established rules, traditions and conventions manifested by Manning in 'A Shell', 'The Face' and 'Grotesque' is not a substantial base on which to lay a claim for a writer's renascence, yet it is significant in relationship to his small output and to the inspiration resulting in *The Middle Parts of Fortune*. After all, the (admittedly tongue in cheek) so-called *Complete Poetical Works of T.E. Hulme* consists of only five very short poems.[80] In any case, during Manning's exposure to the carnage and destruction with its associated intense soul-searching, he came to realise that the old standards by which writers worked were inadequate for two reasons. They failed firstly, to communicate the reality of such devastation previously inconceivable, and secondly to engage the attention of a later generation fired by the immediate appeal of subjectivity. As shown, the resulting poems are few in number, but they are the faithful product of those reflections, delivered with Modernist pungency.

After the extreme subject matter expressed appropriately in the war poems, the remaining poems in the volume, written earlier, but because they mostly revert to the form already covered in *Poems*, require a determined

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[80] Ezra Pound, *Ripostes* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1912) in which the *Complete Poetical Works of T.E. Hulme* was included as an appendix after having been first published in *New Age*, January 1912.

readerly adjustment in order to appreciate their intentions. However there are some welcome surprises. In the discussion above of *The Vigil of Brunhild*, inferences are made to remembrances of personal tender attachments to persons unknown colouring Manning's composition, a point which is noted again in later poems. Now, more and stronger protestations of deep personal affection, their object still unidentified, appear in some of the poems in the second section of *Eidola*. Although the addresses are less passionate and, so far as one can judge, less constant than those of a Petrarch to his Laura for their dedicatees when named are several, they nevertheless carry conviction expressed with elegance. Lack of further information leaves unanswered questions of whether they represent another of Manning's phantoms, or form a poetic conceit exploring avowals of love, or are the carefully disguised addresses to a particular loved one, or even are an obeisance to Platonic love. Without the benefit of evidence supporting any of these alternatives, one or all of them could be made plausible when taking poem by poem or groupings thereof as the measure.

Manning's temperament prevented him from sharing his private life with any but a very few of his close acquaintances. However a writer who hopes to prosper is obliged to make some concessions to public curiosity, rather than withdraw from it as did Manning. Contributory to this withdrawal was the lifetime burden which Manning felt of ill-health, eventually complicated by his problem with drink. In letters to actual and prospective hostesses or answering calls to public occasions he frequently used his health as a reason to offer apologies for the poor company he provided or for his inability to accept their invitations. At his best Manning is known to have been very sociable, at his worst he was a victim of his retreat into self-recrimination.

'Crocus Song', reproduced here, is quoted as representative of his

amatory poems while it also carries strong reminders of the Decadent Movement favoured by earlier writers. The poem has a beautifully proportioned structure evoking a love passionate yet delicate and ultimately attainable:

> The first flame, the first spear of spring,
> A thing perfected of the dews and fire,
> Saffron in hoar-frost, brightened as with wine:
> Thou blossoming in the heart of me!
> Ah, golden
> Is she whose love hath led me through the world
> A thing of dews and fire, of wine and saffron!
> Gray willows veiling my beloved
> Bend above her,
> As though you would love her,
> Now clear water shadoweth her whiteness.
>
> Ere brown bees go abroad murmuring,
> One saffron crocus hath made glad desire,
> To follow on swift feet slim feet of thine;
> Love wakening for joy of thee,
> Beholden
> As golden petals of one flower unfurled,
> Brimmed up with dews and fire, with wine and saffron.
> Clear waters shadowing her whiteness
> Flow beside her,
> As tho' you would hide her,
> Jealous that mine eyes have my beloved.

The reminders it carries arise from the very core of Decadence in English literature. When Dorian Gray picked up Lord Henry Wotton's 'yellow book' he was fascinated because the

> style in which it was written was that curious jewelled style, vivid and obscure at once, full of argot and of archaisms, of technical expressions and of elaborate paraphrases, that characterises the work of some of the finest artists of the French school of *Symbolistes*. There were in it metaphors as monstrous as orchids, and as subtle in colour. The life of the senses was described in terms of mystical philosophy.[81]

À Rebours of Joris-Karl Huysmans is said to be the model for Lord Henry Wotton's 'yellow book' and Oscar Wilde's fitting résumé of its style stands as a gauge for Decadent writing. However while that style facilitated the bizarre which engrossed Dorian Gray's attention, and 'Crocus Song' does encompass much of that same style, there are only suggestions of Huysmans' extravagance in Manning's work. Others of the love poems reproduce the weary

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[81] G.F. Maine (Ed.), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in *The Works of Oscar Wilde*, (London: Collins, 1948), p.101.

resignation favoured by the Decadents and exemplified in Ernest Christopher Dowson's poetry. Manning's epigrammatic 'Past' shares that poet's inclination toward lassitude and regret:

> We played in this garden, long ago,
> Long ago! Wind stirs the young grasses;
> Petals drift from the apple-boughs,
> Like snow, that covers up everything,
> Everything!

Before leaving the analysis of *Eidola* which concludes this chapter, there remain two more matters, rather different from the above, deserving of attention. The first of these arises from 'Paroles Sans Musique' and 'To Sàï' taken together. 'Paroles Sans Musique', a kind of inversion of Felix Mendelssohn's 'Song without Words', is dedicated to Jelly d'Aràny and Sàï (pronounced Shai) was her family pet name.[82] It is not clear how intimate Manning became with Jelly. He met her at musical gatherings organised by Eva Fowler and he also attended public recitals she gave as he was a keen concert and theatre goer in London and elsewhere when staying with friends. He wrote to William Rothenstein of one impending stay with Eva Fowler:

> She threatens me with hordes of people. As a rule she gives me some music, but my adorable Jelly d'Aranyi has gone to Edinburgh with her fiddle.[83]

For the usually formal and reserved Manning to address her in print familiarly as Sàï suggests that they enjoyed a close and relaxed relationship. 'Paroles Sans Musique' is not a memorable poem although patient reading does reveal a depth of devotion within it which is heavily overlaid and ornamented with Classical and Decadent terminology. It commences and concludes with the rather ardent line, 'Ah, the night! The eyes!' and throughout languishes over Jelly's striking appearance and her apparently troubled mind:

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[82] Joseph Macleod, *The Sisters d'Aranyi*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), p.175.

[83] Rothenstein papers, letter dated 16 March, 1920.

> For God hath filled you with the memory
> Of things forgotten by man; and your eyelids
> Close upon lost splendours.
> Yea! They are heavy with the secrets of time;
> Troubled by the strangeness of beauty.

In strict keeping with the title no reference is made to her violin virtuosity although some sounds, 'maddening cymbals' and 'The strings and flutes of pain', are heard against 'the weariness of desiring'. The companion piece 'To Sàï' is addressed to an elusive child who must be tempted with small gifts left seemingly by chance in order to draw her closer. Jelly d'Aràny was notoriously flirtatious and if Manning entertained fond hopes for her he had first to displace several formidable rivals among whom were Aldous Huxley, Edward Elgar, Béla Bartók, Jan Masaryk and George Leigh-Mallory. The chances of this self-effacing and struggling poet advancing his suit ahead of such opposition seem very slim. In the course of events, neither Manning nor Jelly ever married. However, and herein lies one more irony, it is thought that the great love of Jelly's life was another Australian, a former Eton and Balliol scholar, a gifted musician and an outstanding sportsman, who was killed on the Somme battlefield in 1916, more or less within artillery range of Manning.

The second subject for comment derives from 'The Image Seller', one of Manning's best poems and a vehicle for further interaction with Ezra Pound through Pound's poem 'The Return' which was first published in the *English Review* of June 1912 and included in *Ripostes* that year.[84] Immediately upon publication 'The Return' won Pound great praise, reflected still in its status as a standard anthology piece. Yeats commended it as 'the most beautiful poem that has been written in the free form, one of the few in which I find real organic rhythm'. Later he acknowledged its spontaneity and at the same time its deeply felt empathy with antiquity when claiming that

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[84] Ezra Pound, *Ripostes* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1912).

it seemed to have been 'translated at sight from an unknown Greek masterpiece'.[85]

'The Return' describes the approach, fraught with hesitancy, of the gods as hunters, into the modern age. However it is not so much the narrative as the rhythmic form which makes the poem remarkable. Psychological changes within the gods confronting this traumatic new experience correspond with time changes contrasting their past and present circumstances, sometimes crowded breathlessly into a couple of words within a different thought train, where each new combination is delineated by an appropriate metrical change. For example the opening stanza's measured cadence equates with the difficult progress and perplexing decisions the gods face:

> See, they return; ah, see the tentative
> Movements, and the slow feet,
> The trouble in the pace and the uncertain
> Wavering!

That present state is contrasted with the lively metre of a later stanza proclaiming the gods as the hunters they were formerly, and their hounds:

> Haie! Haie!
> These were the swift to harry;
> These the keen-scented;
> These were the souls of blood.

Overall the metrical scheme of verbal rhythms merges into an abstract imaginative, rather than a visual representational shape, embodying Pound's concept of what 'the return' actually entails, that is, the proposition that what the gods once were they could be again given some encouragement, but it is a mission competing against the undeniable tradition of metamorphoses. This work aptly illustrates Pound's theory of 'absolute rhythm' which is a sculptural concept 'wherewith the poet cuts his design in TIME'.[86]

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[85] W.B. Yeats, *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, (Oxford:-OUP, 1936), p.xxvi.

[86] Pound, *ABC of Reading*, p.199

In the months preceding the composition of 'The Return' and 'The Image Seller' Manning wrote to Pound reminding him of the need to pay careful attention to metre and diction in the translation, as well as in the mimesis, of Classical and medieval literature in order to replicate the sense, feeling, tone and intention of writers in those periods. Manning's own application of those four meanings when addressing himself to Pound shows that he was in no way overawed by Pound's irascibility. One of his letters reads:

> Thank you for the Dante volumes. I have not yet read them, but I have enjoyed some of the Carducci. I am going to stay with the Provost of Oriel, at Oxford, in October. He has translated the Purgatory, and is translating the Paradise, in the metre of Marvell's Cromwellian Ode. I think I showed it to you when you were here. You might be interested in Walter Headlam's Life and Poems. His Book of Greek Verse contains some admirable translations: one of that fine third chorus from Oedipus Coloneus.[87]

The reference to Giosuè Carducci (1835-1907) is significant as it documents their mutual interest in the application of the Classical heritage to contemporary writing, in this case Italian, through Carducci whose poetry honours Italy's Classical inheritance at the expense of Romanticism and Church preferences. Much of that Nobel laureate's poetry is based on Classical quantitative metre. Similarly Andrew Marvell's great political poem, 'An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland', referred to by Manning, derives from the lyric poetry of early Greece via Horace.

More aggressive in its approach is Manning's later letter to Pound which is clearly only one item in a lively exchange and illustrates their enjoyment in skirmishing with each other:

> My dear Pound:
> You are a damned fool, and I can neither read your damned hieroglyphics, nor those other hieroglyphics by which you seek to explain them.
> I have been reading Chaucer and Dante, and various similarities struck me: the same minute and realistic handling of detail, for

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[87] Pound collection, letter dated 30 August, 1910.

instance. The translators all lose a great deal I think, by expressing a mediaeval system of thought, and the mediaeval form of things in modern terms. It needs a constant effort of the mind to re-adjust the difference; but a modified use of archaic forms of speech would avoid this. Now, don't talk nonsense about poetry not having the characteristics of any particular age but being for all time; because if what is purely mediaeval in Dante is admitted, and allowances made for it in translating, the eternal element only becomes the more apparent.
My view is simply that a translator of Dante should take as his model, but purely as a model, the English verse of the XIVth century *The Vision of Piers Ploughman*, Chaucer, and *The Pearl*. In such a medium he would be able to reflect more clearly the mediaeval spirit, and at the same time he might get closer to the original, by a careful handling of the Romance element in the speech of these poets.
Fare thee well, and God pity thee, and make thy penmanship better
Yours always
Fred
Item: next time you wish to be *ironical* be careful of your spelling. 'Choryambics' quotha! If *you* wrote them, Pound, they would be chorea-iambics.[88]

In the light of this lecturing by Manning and the emergence of 'The Return' soon after, some credit is due to Manning for the progress Pound made with his poetics.

Earlier in this thesis, when comparing Manning's 'Kore' and Pound's 'Canzon: The Yearly Slain' together, the claims were made that Manning's effort very probably preceded Pound's and surpassed it in poetic quality. In the case under discussion now 'The Return' and 'The Image Seller' also bear a resemblance even though they differ certainly in structure and precisely in theme, but on this occasion Pound's composition takes precedence both in publication and in quality. Another letter of Manning's to Pound, dated 16 March, 1914, includes mention of 'The Return' and 'The Image Seller', recommending the latter to Pound's notice obviously as a new composition. Also in a letter to Fairfax dated three days earlier, Manning describes his own poem as 'admirable'.

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[88] Pound collection, letter dated 25 September, 1911.

Similarity between these two poems lies in the adoption of literary resources, differently applied but both effective, to bridge the obstacle of time in order to summon an era long gone. Whereas Pound's principal device is his highly developed quantitative metre used to seize upon the essence of his intention, Manning relies more on narrative precision combined with metaphor and his less inspired application of the same metre. As a result 'The Return' makes an immediate and spectacular impact while the appeal of 'The Image Seller' is more muted and subtle and therefore, it may be argued, more traditional.

The theme of Manning's poem differs from 'The Return' in addressing the timelessness of Classical inspiration. This intelligence is directed to a current generation by an 'image seller' who regales his audience with an appreciation of the gods and their arts through his handicraft. The inventory of his wares is linked to a muster of the Greek pantheon with its accompanying centaurs, dryads and Pan, somewhat evocative of processional figures comprising the frieze on a Greek temple and reminiscent of Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' in presenting beauty outside time. Although this message is intended to rouse praise and delight among the image seller's customers their reaction, in fact, is one of jealousy. They cry, 'We too would be deathless as these are, | We, the hunted!' The image seller's response is strongly didactic:

> For in these gods mine hands have wrought,
> In these alone are ye deathless.

His retort carries the lesson that existence alone does not win immortality. To become so life must be imbued with the talents the gods stand for. A life is not fulfilled in being merely itself but only becomes so when the 'hunted' becomes the hunter. Furthermore, so this merchant implies, immortality is accessed through the example set by 'image seller[s]' such as himself.

This chapter shows the range in subjects and structure of Frederic

Manning's poetry within its relatively small, but highly condensed, compass. An important issue explores the question of religious faith during the significant historical periods of pagan Classical Greece to early and modern Christian Europe. About the concept of faith itself, Manning considers the two interrelated conditions for its survival, one being the susceptibility of individuals to faith's appeal and the other the strength of the hierarchy in maintaining authority. Together with those conditions he recognises there come the consequences resulting from contumacy. To Classical minds faith was less significant in the perpetuation of religion than was their belief in fate and in the celebration of festivals, but a full examination of faith in that context would be lengthy and outside the purposes of this discussion. Suffice it to say here that whatever faith the populace held was subordinated to belief in the gods' implacability and use of humanity as toys to satisfy their own vanity without any promise of a rewarding after-life. This corner-stone of ancient religion is illustrated by Manning in the contest he describes between Theseus and Hippolyta, and even in the qualified compassion of 'Kore' and 'The Image Seller'. But as civilisation advanced so changed with it, or rather emerged from it, the concept of faith.

Shortly after the demise of Hellenistic Greece the Norse culture achieved a limited ascendancy. The faith with which Manning endows Helgi and Gudrun involves trust resembling that of their Hellenic and Hellenist counterparts. They observe duty to, rather than faith in, a pantheon of gods each with specific attributes. Also, like the Greeks' Mount Olympus, the Norse have their Asgard which offers to their privileged heroes an eternity of bliss in company with the twelve gods and twenty-six goddesses. Quietly insinuated into Manning's story however is the personage of a shipwrecked 'lean saint', despised by Helgi, who represents the early intrusion of Christian 'greater glory' into that pagan world.

Eventually the spread of Christianity in Europe carried to its converts a new faith in one omnipotent God the saviour of their souls and with it, under the Church's organised central authority and influence, the power to enforce adherence to that faith. However as time passed the very energetic nature of Christian thinking worked against that authority, to loosen the bonds of doctrine and give voice to alternative versions of faith. One such voice was that of Brunhild, whom Manning champions.

Faith is projected into modern times in *Poems* mostly in a personalised form, a wider coverage coming later in his prose writing. Several of these verses do explore the prospect of faith's leading to immortality while others diversify into remorse for blighted hopes. Throughout all of his writing however, there persists a strong commitment to experimentation with poetics. For example the phraseology of the lines below from 'Serenade', typical of the poem in full, is structured to convey the feeling of a serenade projected into a languorous setting by using syntactical surprises and sudden metrical changes smoothed by an even spread of sibilants and soft palatals. Hence one experiences in the forced pauses emphasised by compression, as occur between 'come, shining' and more strongly in 'Sleep, dream, dreaming smile', intervals of placid reflection leading to sleep:

> Dreams come, shining things,
> Through the curtains of thy bed;
> Doves fly with soft wings
> Round thy golden, drowsy head:
> Sleep, dream, dreaming smile,
> Curtained from the world awhile.[89]

Exemplified here is versification's concern to find form through structure and metre, in this case a serenade tending toward a lullaby soothing away daily cares into sleep.

The robust Modernist element is introduced by Manning into his wartime

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[89] Manning, 'Serenade', *Poems*, p.91.

compositions. One would have liked to see more written under post-war conditions, but following the return to his peacetime routine he abandoned poetry altogether so that any further development he might have undergone in the genre can be only conjectural. 'Hurleywayne' in *Eidola* sounds notes of assault into, even optimism for, the resolution of his earlier vexations:

> And challenging fairy horns that invite to the chace
> Gay, light o' heart. And the galloping host,
> Winding their horns, rush by as wind in the grass,
> Shimmering; and the horns from afar ring out,
> Farther and farther away.

Although the metaphor is literary rather than realistic the 'fairy horns' 'ring out' with courage equalling that with which Childe Roland blows his slug-horn,[90] but from a landscape less fantastic and dreamy than Browning's.

One's wish for more poetry to follow his promising Modernist beginning is counteracted by a feeling of completion which pervades the three volumes. Therefore by the evidence of his subsequent concentration on prose Manning possibly recognised this finality himself and decided that prose would better serve his future purposes, much like William Morris who, after the publication of his own last major poem in 1876, 'developed an attitude of pessimistic impossibilism towards poetry'.[91] An important corollary arises from this conclusion. In Manning's poetry lies the germ of his success. His poetry, to a significant extent, dwells upon warfare. Brunhild is a warrior queen who, in the ferocity of her time, relies upon military victories for her survival; 'Theseus and Hippolyta' is the description of a battle, its savage hand to hand fighting told in graphic detail; 'Helgi of Lithend' is another exposition on conquest, its authenticity deriving from the battle of Maldon, with attendant boastful warrior prowess. And while Manning's prose genre, to be covered in succeeding chapters, becomes the medium for a

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[90] Robert Browning, 'Childe Roland To The Dark Tower-Came' (1853).

[91] Paul Thompson, *The Work of William Morris*, (London: Heineman, 1967), p.148.

considerable expansion on the general subject matter of his poetry, it is, finally, his masterly statement on war, *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, which excells everything else he wrote. Nevertheless the final observation arising from this analysis of Frederic Manning as a poet is to identify him with, in his own words, the figure of an 'image seller' confident in the quality of his wares.

CHAPTER 3

MINOR PROSE WORKS

The minor prose works of Frederic Manning comprise reviews for *The Spectator*, reviews and other critical articles for *The Criterion*, and freelance articles for several literary journals. He has defined the difficulties of literary criticism as:

> The weakness of every criticism is to be sought for, as a general rule, in the personality of the critic, which is deposited as a vague and delicate film upon every fact handled and applied by him. This personal quality, moreover, has itself been moulded by the imperceptible action of our own age, it has been modified and influenced by the floating ideas and opinions which pass current among us, and which we accept, too often, without any close critical examination.[1]

The significance of this statement is in his awareness of the deficiencies in critics and the obstacles which they face, its other drift showing his courage to advertise to his readers the pitfalls into which they can push him. Therefore, when reading the following criticisms links may be established between them in deciding how closely he adheres to his own standards.

i. 1909-1920: Articles in *The Spectator*

The Spectator of Frederic Manning's day took its name from two previous and quite separate immensely popular eighteenth century periodicals. They had appealed to a new and growing middle-class readership with a taste for literature mainly concerned with manners and morals. After its revival in the nineteenth century (and therein somewhat collaring the reputation of its predecessors) *The Spectator* had established an attitude of 'educated radicalism' to its readers by the time John St. Loe Strachey became editor

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[1] Manning, 'Greek Genius and Greek Democracy', *The Edinburgh Review*, Vol.217, No.444, April 1913, pp.334-51.

covering the period of Frederic Manning's involvement. Strachey denied the journal's writers the use of bylines, thereby preventing its readers from associating Manning with the quality of his critical analysis. This additional brush with anonymity further reduced his access to public recognition. However one limited benefit to him was the welcome source of income additional to the meagre allowance he received from his father in Sydney.

As is obvious from the tabulation in Appendix II, the large quantity of reviewing Manning undertook in the early years of his journalism fell away sharply in later years, and although the intervention of the Great War partly explains this, clear signs of his waning interest appeared long before August 1914. In fact as early as 26 April, 1911, he wrote to Fairfax:

> I want above all things to get on with my work [*The Golden Coach*], which has been coming well lately; and I can't work without quiet and freedom from interruptions. Half a dozen books, mostly rubbish are lying on the floor, simply rotting there, when they should have been reviewed a month ago. Let 'em rot. Reviewing, except a good book now and again is not worth while.[2]

When Manning asked his editor for some relief from the chore, John St. Loe Strachey did placate him by offering a reasonable compromise:

> I told Strachey that I did not care to review all the books he sent me, and wished to get on with my own work. He said in reply that he was very anxious for me to go on; and to pass over books I did not care about.[3]

Even so, the commitment remained a source of annoyance to Manning, frequently mentioned in later letters to Fairfax.

One line of reviewing he chose to follow conscientiously was that on Jonathan Swift, initiated through a 'singularly unconvincing' biography sent to him by Strachey and continued by him through volumes of Swift's collected

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[2] Fairfax papers, No.89, letter dated 26 April, 1911..

[3] Fairfax papers, No.90, letter dated 12 May, 1911.

correspondence. His appreciation foreshadows the twentieth century upsurge in critical recognition of Swift. The biography, dismissed by Manning and now hardly even a curiosity, enabled him to familiarise an attentive readership with Swift and to expand upon it later in his laudatory reviews of the sympathetically edited letters. He writes:

> We could not find a better proof than in the example of Swift that genius is an assemblage of qualities, in which the defects have as great a value as the excellences. His style is always the great style of passionate utterance; his bitterness derives from a sensibility which would scorn to express itself through emotional prettinesses. His tragedy was not so much the tragedy of disappointed ambition as of disillusion in life. But it is a tragedy; it is not merely a failure.[4]

Probably there has not been a more candid political commentator than Swift. He lived among public figures in an arena of intense political ferment effecting both State and Church, upon which matters Manning reports with admirable clarity and impartiality, concluding, 'The cant of politics he hated as much as the cant of piety' (23 July, 1910, p.134). Manning uses the evidence of apt quotations from the correspondence to refute allegations of misanthropy, continuing to this day, made against Swift. His defence is that Swift

> had many qualities which are lovable in themselves: his affection for his mother, for Stella, and for Arbuthnot; his devotion to Harley in disgrace; his absolute honesty and lack of self-interest; his public spirit and private charities; the absence from his nature of political prejudice [...]. (23 July, 1910, p.135).

In determining the thrust of Swift's 'humour', Manning observes in him

> a savage and unholy laughter. He strips human vice and folly of their cloaks and conventions, and flogs them naked before him through the streets. He sees men and things as in themselves they really are, contrasting a man as he lived in the intimacy of his own private circle with the same man upon the public stage, ruling the destinies of the kingdom and shaping the future of the race. (23 July, 1910, p.134)

Swift, Manning adds, never 'laughed and shook in Rabelais' easy chair,' his

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[4] *The Spectator*, 12 April, 1913, p.619. Further references to *The Spectator* are given after quotations in the text.

humour being never of the kind Anatole France praises in *Don Quixote* and *Candide*. Manning believes Gulliver springs from a temperament and nature more akin to John Bunyan's than to Cervantes' or Voltaire's. For 'the tear upon the eyelid of a jest' in English literature, we must look, says Manning, to Laurence Sterne (27 November, 1915, p.746).

In Manning's opinion Swift's mind, in its idealism, its humour, and its disillusion should be compared with those of William Langland and John Milton. He summarises the chief characteristic of Swift's writing as

> a hatred of all cant and hypocrisy, and of that intolerance which elevates an opinion into a dogma, a truth divinely revealed, without which salvation is impossible. Such intolerance he gibbets with equal relentlessness whether he finds it in the Whig cant [...] or in the theology of the Churches. His satire is great because behind it as an impulsive force is that savage indignation against unrighteousness. (23 July, 1910, p.135)

Finally in chronicling his subject's sad demise, Manning quotes from Swift's painfully accurate self-observations to, 'perhaps explain the fatality of Swift, the dangerous gift of being able to consider oneself as an objective fact.' (27 November, 1915, p.746)

Manning's critical touchstones are Chaucer, Dante, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Milton, and to a lesser extent Thomas Gray, Matthew Arnold, William Morris and Thomas Hardy. Perhaps by coincidence the sum total of his *Spectator* articles is published between his first and last reviews of books on Shakespeare. The first of these books under review, *The Man Shakespeare and his Tragic Life Story* (18 December, 1909, pp.1055-56), is by Frank Harris, a notorious braggart and liar. For a while the book attracted some popularity despite its ridicule by scholars, and proposes as its theme that 'it is possible from Shakespeare's writings to establish beyond doubt the main features of his character and the chief incidents of his life.' Similar claims have been made with little or no more credibility among succeeding generations of Shakespearean commentators. To this particular claim Harris

adds, 'Hamlet is the most complex and profound of Shakespeare's creations, and therefore probably the character in which Shakespeare revealed most of himself,' and then includes 'the Hamlet vein' in a 'portrait' of Brutus. Manning proceeds to demolish these propositions briskly and effectively. One trap the author unwittingly laid for himself, and had quickly sprung by Manning, was to assert, 'Shakespeare's purpose [of self-revelation] is surely the same as Montaigne's,' adding that 'it would be hasty to decide that his skill [unclear whether Shakespeare's or Montaigne's] is inferior.' Evidence indicates that Manning was well read in French literature. His rebuttal of that conceit is conclusive:

> it is quite impossible for us to admit that the dramatic form used by Shakespeare offers the same facilities for self-revelation as are offered in the essays. The one is bound about by rigid conventions, by the demands of character, of action, of plot; the other is a conversation with one's self, pleasantly discursive, wandering in any direction which offers novelty or adventure. The question is not whether Shakespeare's skill is inferior to Montaigne's, nor whether Shakespeare's verse and prose are better vehicles of expression; it is entirely a question as to the relative objects of different arts.

He further objects that if Shakespeare reveals himself in the character of Hamlet, as Harris contends, it is entirely through emotions not only common to all poets, precisely as in Virgil and Wordsworth, but common to all people at certain moments in their lives. It is not at all extraordinary or significant, therefore, that 'the Hamlet vein' should reappear in many of Shakespeare's characters; it would be far more extraordinary if it did not. More censure of Harris follows:

> The supreme art of Shakespeare shows us that at some moments the limits of human personality are transcended, and the individual is merged in the general conscience of humanity. It is simply a shallow or cynical indifference to the ideals which are necessary to mankind, and a wilful ignorance of the realities of life itself, which describe such transcending moments as faults in art. Wherever we touch 'the personal revelation' we feel under our hand merely the common heart of humanity beating as it has always beaten. Shakespeare would not be the supreme artist that he is if it were not so.

This aperçu recognises Shakespeare's ability to create individuality in his characters under their outward mundanity. Those who call this a failure in

characterisation are mistaken. Acute observation is often needed to recognise individuality otherwise masked by a general blandness. In the dramatisation of character Shakespeare is still foremost, not only for his understanding of, but also for the manner in which he articulates, this fact. In conclusion Manning dispatches Harris's book to the scrap-heap of voguish 'scandalous memoirs' and goes probably as close as he dares to denouncing its author as a fraud.

The second of these reviews (3 April, 1920, pp.459-60) is of M.A. Bayfield's *A Study of Shakespeare's Versification*. Bayfield had earlier published 'a scientific system of prosody for students of English verse,' which will be discussed here later. This effort, on Shakespeare's versification was, 'the logical application of his system to one particular poet.' In Manning's view the book raises

> a great many problems of textual criticism and emendation which we can only indicate, the main question being still that which concerns the trochaic base of prosody.

Manning goes on to discourse on the evolution of metre through its trochaic and iambic origins. This leads into particularities of Shakespearean textual difficulties such as trustworthiness of the early texts, 'arbitrary and partial methods' of textual revisions, printers' laxity, and the differences between the dramatic actor and the poet in Shakespeare and his scribes. Manning develops in detail the last of these points which 'is quite distinct from [...] the metrical usage of Shakespeare's day, or the habits of contemporary speech, or the fashion of words employed by any courtly, or rustic character.' Even if we assume perfection, Manning declares, in Shakespeare,

> metrical questions have not the same importance in our dramatic as in our lyric and epic verse; metrical science is not the same keen critical tool in dealing with accentual verse as in dealing with quantitative verse; the laws which have governed the development of poetry among us have been elastic and flexible; we are not a classic people, we are too wãnton, too adventurous.

Ultimately the purist in Manning supports 'that conservative prejudice which

prefers even a faulty and erroneous text which is early, to one over which modern scholarship has worked until it resembles a palimpsest.' As in the previous review, but with more room for general agreement, he recommends the empirical certainty of the existing text over fallible editorial speculation.

There are three contributions which bear some relationship to the above articles. They are 'English Prose Rhythm' (28 September, 1912, pp.453-54), 'Lyric Poetry' (1 November, 1913, p.683), and on the above author in 'Rhythm in Verse' (20 December, 1919, p.864).

The first of these three reviews covers George Saintsbury's *A History of English Prose Rhythm*. It is obvious that Saintsbury's writing, based on style rather than on content, annoyed Manning who, even though he knew and apparently liked Saintsbury, remained unawed by his literary reputation and unseduced by his amiability. Impatient with Saintsbury, that paragon of Victorian literary taste, Manning bypasses him for style to favour the earlier Sainte-Beuve (1804-69) a forerunner of modern literary criticism. Manning's sympathies are clearly divided, for while he is entertained by the author's accommodating approach, the scholar in him is appalled by the academic's dereliction of duty towards 'soundness of theory' in presenting his history of prose rhythm. Manning assumes the mantle of pedagogue. He explains metre as the measure of rhythm, 'and without this measure we cannot lay down any laws concerning it.' But since prose rhythm does not rely on metre, it seems to Manning impossible to attempt the scansion of prose by the application of any foot-system such as Saintsbury allows. His summary of the text under criticism is:

> "Prose neither possesses metre nor is destitute of rhythm." With this quotation from Aristotle Professor Saintsbury begins his work, and thereafter expends an enormous amount of energy to remain in precisely the same place.

Manning suggests that prose rhythm in being dramatic, and not repetitive results mainly from the relative proportions of sound and silence. Prose

therefore contains a sentence-based rhythm independent of repetition. 'In prose every period has its own principle of organic development, and when it is completed there is no repeat or return, but with the new period begins the application of a new principle.' Although Manning congratulates Saintsbury on his prose and the 'art of selection' he applies in choosing his literary examples, Manning believes it is not possible to approach prose rhythm in Saintsbury's manner.

Manning again differs from another literary celebrity, Ernest Rhys, in the second of the three reviews named above. Rhys's *Lyric Poetry* 'is not exceptional' in Manning's estimate. Rather, he thinks the author 'has attempted to cover too much ground, and has not resisted an inclination to deal with merely curious verses, such as spell-rhymes, and with work of a purely antiquarian interest.' In Manning's only other direct reference to the book he questions the applicability of *Beowulf* to the case. His own understanding of the evolution of lyric poetry traces it from later, medieval song, sources since 'the Anglo-Saxon element is not simply modified by the action of French and Italian influences, but dissolved by them' in the composition of 'popular' and 'courtly' lyrics. Also, in the lyric poetry of these two languages he identifies the influence of classical Greece, in which 'one person. then another, and then a third is detached from what was originally a simple chorus; and with the emerging of personality the form becomes more complex.' He then associates the introduction of these new forms into England with dances and round games, wakes and festivals, drawing a distinction between dramatic songs which provided the music for dancing, *caroles* and *ballets*, and lyric songs which expressed some personal and characteristic emotion. These lyric beginnings appear in the Petrarch-inspired sonnets of Wyatt and Surrey, in the extravagances of Crashaw, and on down to the odes of Marvell, Milton, Gray, Wordsworth and Collins. Even so Manning declines to credit these poets with being truly lyrical because:

> However highly we may rank these masterpieces, the fact remains that as specimens of lyrical form they are deficient: they are not, strictly speaking, lyrical at all, because they are not strophaic [*sic.*].[...] much of what we call lyrical poetry, in four-lined stanzas of octasyllabics, rhymed alternatively, might more properly be called elegiac.

Partly for its questionable historical accuracy he is dismissive of Rhys's account, leaving it with the quip that it would be more profitable to inquire into the future of English lyric poetry than into its history.

The third of these reviews analyses a systematic study of English prosody in Bayfield's *The Measure of the Poets.* Manning's article details the origins, development and relative applications of the trochaic and iambic bases, together with the spondee and the incompatibility between accentual and quantitative metres. Where he deviates most strongly from the author is over free verse. For, he states, while English verse has not maintained its connection with music, as did Greek lyrism, even although 'some exquisite Elizabethan lyrics and airs [...] may haunt our memory', yet contrary to this general trend the author

> lays down the rule that "in verse the stresses must occur at regular intervals." Modern verse, in the case of *vers libres*, and modern music, ignore the rule; the particular instance we have in mind being a poem called "The Return" by Mr Pound, set to music by Mr Rummel.

Manning's reference to 'The Return' recalls the inquiry made in the previous chapter into a comparison between his own poem 'The Image Seller' and Pound's 'The Return'. The reappearance here of Pound's poem illustrates Manning's use of his practical creative experience in his reviewing. Manning takes issue against Bayfield for saying that Horace failed to distinguish between metre and rhythm, for his questionable interpretation of elision, and for misleadingly applying an identical notation to quantitative and accentual verse. However Manning is prepared broadly to accept Bayfield's system and compliments him for a 'careful patience that is beyond praise'.

One further observation arises from this review. In it, Manning

summarises his idea of the form and content of poetry:

> our heroic verse owes nothing to music, even though the rhythm is strongly marked. While length or quantity is musical, stress has a more dramatic quality, the emphasis of a gesture; and we should remember that gesture is also rhythmical, fulfilling a period of time. It is gesture, not music, that makes the beauty of
>
> "This bodiless creation, ecstasy
> Is cunning in.
> Ecstasy!"[5]
>
> Here, there is no distribution of stress; the whole weight of the line is accumulated upon the first syllable of Hamlet's exclamation.[...] Prosody is a matter for the grammarians, rather than the poets, who are an incorrigibly idle race, with delicate ears.

Fifty years later two noted critics of the subject put together their ideas of the relationship between prosody and the intrinsicality of poetic expression:

> You can write a grammar of the meter. And if you cannot, there is no meter. But you cannot write a grammar of the meter's interaction with the sense, any more than you can write a grammar of the arrangement of metaphors. The interactions and the metaphors are the free and individual and unpredictable (though not irrational) parts of the poetry. You can perceive them, and study them, and talk about them, but not write rules for them.[6]

Both parties agree that grammarians' rules have limited application to prosody because poets, being 'incorrigibly idle' or 'free and individual and unpredictable', disregard them.

Sixteen other reviews, published between 10 September, 1910 and 16 May, 1914, indirectly complement the writing of his historical romance *The Golden Coach* set against the late seventeenth century royal court of France and the papal court of Rome. Their composition suggests the confidence he then felt for the work, years before its completion became an impossible dream. These reviews relate to his novel not so much through its plot, as through the novel's setting, characters and dialogue. The books reviewed cover a range

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[5] *Hamlet*, III. iv. 137-38.

[6] W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Concept of Meter: An Exercise in Abstraction', Harvey Gross (Ed.), *The Structure of Verse: Modern Essays on Prosody*, (New York: Fawcett, 1966), p.163.

of French and Italian literature and history. The French component includes Lytton Strachey's *Landmarks in French Literature* and others on its poetry, a French translation of Spenser's sonnets, a French criticism on John Lyly, with further books on Molière, Richelieu and Balzac. Also the reviews reveal Manning's Francophilia and it is this aspect which is here considered first.

In comparing the development of French and English literature he regards the French much more favourably. It is

> self-conscious and deliberate, while with us it has been purely fortuitous; and it is perhaps in consequence of this that a work of the first importance in any branch of literature can scarcely count on finding more than five thousand buyers if it be published in English, while a work of the same rank published in French will find readers in every capital of Europe.
> (10 September, 1910, p.391)

Changed circumstances have modified that claim's plausibility. The succeeding ninety years have seen an enormous growth in communication through travel and technology, with the emergence of English as the international language (expedited by American influences) and new publishing companies applying non-traditional criteria. Manning's reviews include lengthy quotations in French, Italian, Greek and Latin. This practice would be unacceptable in similar periodicals today which dependent upon larger, less educated and reflective readerships. One wonders how Manning's readers felt about it and whether Manning took advantage of the less aggressive public environment to gratify himself as well as the small coterie of acquaintances who knew him as 'Manning of *The Spectator*'. But to return to his point:

> We neglect our literature; we have no standard; our thought suffers because we do not seek to refine our phrase; and we are, intellectually, isolated from the rest of Europe. It is the consciousness of literature as a national possession that has given to the French its splendid qualities of catholicity, style, and all that is implied by the word "humanism".

He does concede however that English literature has had its moments of self-consciousness too, as in 'the Elizabethan age and the age of Pope'.

French literature has the ability to 'express admirably the French

ideal of increased order with increased complexity' (16 March, 1912, p.444). Manning explains French simplicity as only apparent, for behind it lies an elaborate, complicated structure of organic relations. He instances Racine as perhaps best illustrating this ability, for Racine is not only 'a consummate master in the psychology of love', he is also 'the culmination of the Latin race in dramatic poetry, as Sophocles of the Greek and Shakespeare of the English race; and there should be really no comparison or opposition of one to another.' Other writers he eulogises are Villon, Rabelais, Ronsard in whose hands 'the French sonnet [...] has a much purer line than any Elizabethan sonnet'; Montaigne, whose 'thought, so fluid and living that it never imprisons itself in any dead formula, is one of the most important contributions of the French genius'; La Fontaine; Bossuet; the two Saint-Simons (1675-1755 and 1760-1825) as 'ruthless' portraitist of public figures and philosopher respectively; Chénier, Mérimée, Renan and Anatole France.

Manning particularly admires the medieval Provençal writers. The school of

> Conon de Béthune, Chrestien de Troyes, Thibaut de Champagne, Gace Brulé, and Gui Couci [...] possesses a richness of melody and a variety of rhythm such as perhaps have never since been surpassed. (23 December, 1911, p.1123)

He takes exception to the editor of the anthology of French love poems he reviews for finding excuse through 'the fetters of Provençal conventions', to exclude significant poetry of that period from his book:

> If poetry is to be rejected when it is conventional in form and matter, and for no other reason, we should have to reject our own Tudor sonneteers, including Shakespeare, and remove one of the most gorgeous pages in English poetry. (23 December, 1911, p.1123)

Moreover, Manning continues, all imaginative art derives its force from the incalculable element in each individual writer, in the slightest lyric as well as in the greatest dramatic or epic poems. It is because the Provençal lyric survives this test, because each song of the crusades differs subtly from all the others, because even a passion expressed through the convention

of courtly love has its own individuality, that this poetry survives. In a further comparison with English poetry he suggests

> that perhaps the ideal of French poetry has been to make language definitely expressive, while with us the ideal has been to make it definitely suggestive. Such distinctions are, however, nearly always artificial. (23 December, 1911, p.1123)

His review of a French translation of Spenser's sonnets (16 May, 1914, p.835) takes the comparison further. To say 'all poetry suffers in translation', might not have been as trite when Manning used it as it is now. More worthily he continues thus:

> a poem in the process of translation loses either in its emotional music or in its emotional sense. Lesser poetry, because it has become a little conventional and a little less fluid, is more susceptible of translation than the great art which seeks its effects upon the fringes of sense, and achieves its end by a series of light, deft touches, scarcely to be appreciated without reference to each other. Spenser's poetry is of this subtle kind. He is essentially a poets' poet; and, moreover, in spite of his French and Italian models, of Marot, Du Bellay, and Tasso, he is essentially an English poet.

Manning places the English Renaissance later than its European origins, 'if we put aside Chaucer, who had witnessed the first quickening of the new culture in Italy.' But he sees the English response, when it came, as rapid and fairly effortless, scarcely disturbing the native, romantic, and medieval culture. Consequently it did not seem incongruous to the Elizabethans to combine 'the fantastic deformity, the extravagance, the delicacy in detail characteristic of the native genius' with the sudden infusion of Greek influence 'apparent in Spenser, as in Marlow and Shakespeare.' The particular Frenchman Manning reviews has been courageous in translating Spenser's *Amoretti* into French, and in the sonnet form at that, for

> the French [...] have never used alliteration as we have used it, nor any of the verbal plays and antitheses, relics of scholasticism, as graces of expression. The punning sonnets of Shakespeare, to the lucid Gaelic [Gallic?] intelligence, would seem the mere survivals of barbarism, charming, näive perhaps, but barbaric.

Also, Manning adds, in many of its aspects the spirit of English poetry must remain alien to the French; the 'music' of English speech is different,

French verse having more of a tonic quality, while the accentual element is less marked. He concludes on a parochial note by claiming that an English critic is bound to 'speak with some diffidence of the merits of a French verse translation' and therefore he restricts his own detractions to the one point that a more archaic style might have been adopted with advantage by the translator on this occasion.

Remoter still from present day taste is the subject of another review (10 September, 1910, pp.391-92), a study, also in French, of John Lyly by A. Feuillerat, published by the Cambridge University Press. The book is commended for its carefully researched account of the English Renaissance incorporating three generations of Lylys, with a double-edged compliment to the author on his good use of material from J.A. Froude 'whose real greatness is insufficiently appreciated among ourselves.' The advertised price of 12s.6d. must have narrowed its readership even more to a select group comprising fluent French scholars, who were also well off. Manning goes into some detail to explain the derivation and function of Euphuism:

> Euphuism was not an intellectual aberration, but the rigorous application of a clear and orderly method; and whatever its faults, it resulted from a series of artistic efforts to attain to perfection of form. Language is constantly in need of such refinement, of a return upon itself, of a rigorous application of fixed principles. Euphuism gave to the sentence greater precision and clearness. Its chief faults were the excessive employment of antithesis [...] and a similar abuse of comparison [...]. Alliteration is employed in the same way as in the old accentual verse, to emphasise an antithesis, or to contribute to the balance of rhythms, sometimes with remarkable effect [...]. Antithesis, and the parallelism of phrase, alliteration, rhyme, assonances, and play upon words were all in use before Lyly [...]. Lyly, in fact, had simply adopted his style from [George] Pettie [*c.*1548-89], but he made the style general.

The other aspect of Lyly's writing, for theatricals, is less well known. Manning explains that Lyly outlived his popularity because the theatre for which he wrote comprised masques, pastorals and allegories, Italian in character, affected in speech and manner, attracting 'a few refined spirits'. That theatre and its 'spirits' succumbed to the great mass of the people, for

whom his masques were saved from extinction by the adaptations of Ben Jonson and others. What else remains of his influence is discernible in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, Dogberry, his clowns and 'his waiting-women, with their sharp, bitter raillery and love of mischief'. Lyly himself

> could only draw the superficial manners of humanity, while Shakespeare breathes into Rosiland or Beatrice all that variability and quick sensitiveness to occasion which seem the very spirit of the sex.

Thus Lyly, 'charming as he is' cannot speak to humanity because he has no sense of the permanent and universal in human life.

Manning is much less pleased with *Molière: His Life and His Works* by Brander Matthews, reviewed on 24 June, 1911, at pages 969-70. Manning thinks Matthews best on the purely technical and historical aspects of the plays, whereas his discussion of the plays as literature or as life, is not illuminating, and is cold and lifeless in respect of Molière's biography. Manning is merciless when he finds one of his revered icons denigrated. When Louis XIV is disparaged Manning is unsparing in his retaliation. While censuring Matthews's representation of Molière generally, Manning judges him to be

> equally at fault in his presentation of the age, which he would seem to imagine had no other qualities than those of brilliance and corruption. His portrait of Louis XIV shows a lamentable want of historical tact. After quoting Lord Morley's saying that "the best title of Louis XIV to the recollection of posterity is the protection he extended to Molière," he devotes four pages to what is not merely abuse, but silly and conceited abuse. Louis XIV was not only one of the greatest administrators of France, he had an unlimited capacity for work and an unrivalled knowledge of men. It is with reference to these qualities that Napoleon spoke of him as his only rival in the history of France.

Manning continues his attack with further carefully reasoned repudiation of certain 'not only unfair but impertinent' criticisms of Molière and his colleagues Corneille and Scarron. Finally, comparisons between Molière and Shakespeare as comic dramatists, leaving Shakespeare decidedly the inferior, are the last straw for Manning who concludes, 'we think of what we wrote at

the beginning of this notice: that Mr Matthews is at his best in the criticism of technique.'

The critique on Frederick Lawton's *Balzac* (29 October, 1910, pp.694-95) is longer than usual. This is despite a mere dozen lines covering the book, which, however, are followed by some one hundred and seventy lines of Manning's own views on Balzac. In that first paragraph he finds for the author 'many qualities deserving of praise.' They include careful and patient arrangement of the material, intelligent and moderate criticism, as well as a sound historical instinct. Manning, for his part, wishes to go a great deal further, condemning much in Balzac 'entirely on moral grounds; but the moral question in art is complicated in the aesthetic.'

Hence he poses the question, as did Henry James in his review of Zola's *Nana*, of whether 'realism' is not deviously selective:

> The great mass of immoral, sordid, and "realistic" literature is false in art because it treats an exceptional condition of things, and some particular aspect of life, as though they represented the general and the whole.

He instances John Galsworthy, George Sand and Balzac as all departing from the normal, though in different directions: Galsworthy toward a gloomy pessimism, Sand toward a lyrical sentimentalism and Balzac toward animalism. This early disenchantment with Galsworthy anticipates present-day criticisms of him. But of the three writers collectively Manning declares:

> It is a flaw in the register of each, a subjective tendency, which makes their outlook upon life partial, incomplete, unsound. This flaw in Balzac not only vitiates his general outlook upon life, it vitiates his characters and style.

In Manning's estimate Balzac's characters are superficial. Balzac grasps certain obvious traits of speech and mannerism, and exaggerates them; the difference between his primary and secondary characters being only that the former are described more minutely than the latter, not that they are revealed more completely. In comparison:

> What interests us in the great masters is the fluidity of character within certain limitations, its diversity, its contraction and expansion under varying conditions. Balzac's characters seem to us rigid, and to remain unaffected by the play of circumstances. They are so many pieces of mechanism through whom their maker gratifies his own passion for intrigue, for those trickeries and double-dealings which ruined his own life and practically beggared his family.

Then follows a typically cutting Manning observation:

> There is a broad, wholesome irony in the fact that the craft by which so many of his characters attain fortune should have failed in his own case so hopelessly.

Balzac's superficial characterisation reacts also upon his plots which sacrifice drama for burlesque.

Manning's chief objections to Balzac's work are its superficiality, its extravagance and its remoteness from life. Nowhere does he see Balzac conceive of virtue as anything but passive. His vision of humanity in consequence seems to be 'oblique'. Manning illustrates his contention by contrasting Balzac with Thomas Hardy, in his view a master whose pessimism and fatalism are not the mere wounded vanity of an egoist, but touch life at every point. He instances a scene from *The Mayor of Casterbridge* in which the gossips of Casterbridge have gathered around the town pump to discuss the death of Mrs. Henchard[7]. From his obvious enjoyment in reading that theatrical interlude Manning decides:

> There seems to be more of humanity, more of its tears and laughter, of its tragedy and comedy, in that short scene than in anything that Balzac wrote.

Speaking of George Sand, Manning reviews a book (18 October, 1910, pp.560-61) by René Doumic, comprising 'a series of studies' on her. He begins with a brief comment on Anatole France's view of Sand. France saw her 'as she herself saw Nature', with 'pure faith, child-like, and

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[7] Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* [1886], (London: The Folio Society, 1998), Chapter 18, pp.128-30.

unsophisticated.' Manning suggets that this 'criticism of her genius is purely subjective, and perhaps it is not altogether true.' He sees her as 'a person of enthusiasms, whose generosity of mind was balanced by great common-sense.' Her enthusiasms propelled her into situations from which she was only extricated by her commonsense, her whole life being an *affaire de coeur*, but illusion succeeded to illusion so that she was never disenchanted. As an example Manning quotes Sand's benevolent attitude to the Saint-Simonian socialism. In return for her interest they 'sent her fifty presents, which included corsets, and a pair of trousers.' 'Perhaps it was the ambiguity of these gifts,' Manning jests, 'which restrained her from taking an active part in their mission.' He sees her literature as being dominated by the same enthusiasms, but not hampered by the same obstinate realities:

> That little world of the mind's creating is a place inhabited by creatures who are reasonable, whose actions are perfectly intelligible, and who are inspired invariably by the noblest sentiments; and perhaps in consequence, the author's practical common-sense is not sufficiently called into play.

For Manning, Sand's 'chief excellence' lies in her writing about the French peasants and the life of the fields. Saint-Beuve called these books the *Georgics* of France, 'praise, with all its implications' which Manning endorses.

He also finds Doumic, the author's, judgments 'peculiarly applicable to our own contemporary literature'. Doumic believes the triumph of naturalism, by influencing taste for a time, might have stopped the reading of George Sand. At Manning's present time readers are just as tired of documentary literature as they are disgusted with brutal literature. He sees them returning to a better comprehension of what there is of 'truth' in George Sand's conception of the novel. This he sums up as to charm, to touch, to console, and those who know something of life may perhaps wonder whether to console may not be the final aim of literature. In Doumic's interpretation of life's purpose to console and sustain, it seems to Manning

'appropriate to hear almost the words of Arnold from a French mouth.'

One more piece, a biography of Cardinal de Richelieu, completes Manning's coverage of French literature and history. Manning rates this book as 'a piece of honest workmanship' without any original research, and without any brilliant interpretation of characters and events, its writing made easier because, 'of course, [Richelieu is] an admirable subject.' The biography covers the early years of that statesman's carefully schemed rise to power aided by Marie de Médicis, during the reigns of Henri IV and Louis XIII, to the moment when, consolidated in authority, 'his work is all before him, but his character is complete for us.' Manning leaves the impression that Richelieu is one of his great men of history, largely for having established the Académie française.

The reviews on Italian topics mentioned above include critiques of two books of Italian verse, articles on a translation of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, Petrarch's *Secretum*, Giosuè Carducci's poetry, a work of Israel Zangwill's entitled *Italian Fantasies*, and biographical works on members of the Borgia family.

The two books of Italian poetry are *The Oxford Book of Italian Verse* edited by St. John Lucas and *The Forerunners of Dante* by A.J. Butler, both reviewed in the one article of 28 January, 1911, at page 119. Manning's style in this piece is unusually elevated. It is a densely written summary of centuries of Italian poetry incorporating Provençal influences also identified in French and Spanish poetry and in the poems of the German Minnesingers, with all of which Italian poetry is seen to interact. Manning regrets the lack of the space at his disposal in *The Spectator* to linger over the 'golden time ' of Dante, an age which 'scarcely falls short of perfection', but hurries forward

into the new world, - to Petrarch, whose verse has that modernity of form characteristic of all great classical work; to Lorenzo de' Medici, that amazingly many sided man, the perfect type of the Renaissance [...] who had the gift of true song. [...] The great disenchanted soul of Leopardi, with its serene melancholy, its hopeless resignation, rises from the pages [...]. When we read these lines, or the more consolatory music of Carducci, we are able to understand some of the causes which make poetry a persistent factor in human progress.

Reviewing a translaion of Dante (14 October, 1911, pp.599-600), an attempt to reproduce in English verse the *terza rima* of the original, Manning quotes his friend Dr. C.L. Shadwell, the Provost of Oriel College and himself a translator of Dante, who had already strongly opposed the use of this metre for such an enterprise:

> "In the first place, it is not an English metre: it has never been used by any English poet for original composition; its structure is unfamiliar; and the ear does not expect, and is not gratified by meeting with, the recurrent rimes. Secondly, the difficulty, always great, of finding three rimes suitable to the meaning becomes much greater in translation; and it must frequently happen that the words which best reproduce the meaning have to be discarded in favour of weaker ones which fulfil the conditions of the triple ending. The same causes necessitate the use of various forms of 'padding,' of violent inversions and complications of grammatical structure, and of archaic and uncouth expressions employed without any justification in the original."

Manning can find exceptions to the first statement in Byron's loose adaptation of the *terza rima*, Chaucer's employment of the metre limited to a few 'fragmentary and imperfect' lines in the *Compleint to His Lady*, and could have added Shelley's 'The Triumph of Life' and 'Ode To The West Wind'. However although he does find in the translation reviewed examples of all the blemishes mentioned by Dr. Shadwell, he congratulates the writer on his success, considering the difficulties involved in presenting a literal translation in the original metre. That said, Manning sees the literal and metrical ideals to be mutually destructive of each other; and the translation which aims at achieving both invariably fails in either. The needs of the verse demand a sacrifice of the strict literal sense and the sense robs the verse of all 'splendour of diction and the final pomp of language.'

Manning raises another question regarding translation, the relation of the form to the subject and the relation of Dante to contemporary and later English literature. H.F. Cary is Manning's classic translator. Cary took Milton as his model in translating Dante but Manning's view is that:

> *Paradise Lost*, for all its superficial resemblances, is not of the same order as the *Commedia*: it portrays character in action and repeats upon an heroic scale the spectacle of human life creating the future and then exploring it; while the *Commedia* is not so much a representation of life as a commentary on it; its action is not the real action of the world which lies outside us, but an ideal and visionary action, an inward and spiritual development; and naturally, therefore, it verges on the lyric form, while *Paradise Lost* seems to be constantly upon the point of being a dramatic form.

For consideration of how an English poet has handled a subject similar to Dante's, Manning turns to Langland's *Piers Plowman*. But while he applauds the alliterative verse, which William Morris later developed, he rates Langland's verse as much more primitive than that of Dante's contemporaries. Chaucer, on the other hand, was influenced not only by Dante and his predecessors but also by his immediate successors, Petrarch and Boccaccio. Manning does not claim that a translator of Dante should attempt deliberately to imitate Chaucer, 'for it is not the language but the spirit of the time, mirrored by and informing the words, which is of primary importance.' He agrees with Dr Shadwell against the use, without any justification in the original, of uncouth and archaic expressions. Chaucer was as representative of medieval England as was Dante of medieval Italy. But Dante was also, after all

> the complete expression of the medieval spirit; his work is saturated with the ideas and coloured with the life of a particular age, and, however greatly he may have transcended his age, it remains as a distinct element of his work.

Therefore through Dante, an archaic system of thought, an archaic conception of the universe, even the archaic mode of life and form of things are far less likely to be rendered inaccessible if expressed in archaic terms. On the other hand, Chaucer's world is not an entirely different world from Dante's, but it is seen under another light and from a different aspect; and

if it is less spiritual and of a lower order, Chaucer's mind is still as diverse, as human, and as full of understanding.

Manning's review of William H. Draper's *Petrarch's Secret* (27 April, 1912, at pages 647-48), headed 'DE CONTEMPTU MUNDI', is noteworthy among his writing for two reasons. Firstly the review leads to a surprisingly candid personal admission arising from the theme of Petrarch's *Secretum*, and secondly, seventeen years later, he uses the same theme to make an analogous statement out of a sequence of events in his war novel *The Middle Parts of Fortune*. He links the analogy with its supporting development through the phrase *de contemptu mundi*. Both of these applications are expanded upon together here.

> Draper's translation appeals to Manning because, being
>
> clear, flexible, and vigorous, [it] is an admirable medium of translation; and if here and there we find a trace of formalism, a manner of speech which is scarcely idiomatic, it would seem to be only a too faithful reflection of certain characteristics in Petrarch's own self-conscious and somewhat rhetorical style.

He notes Draper's remark that, 'every man loves the book which tells the history of conflicts like his own, and which has helped to give him courage in his warfare and its sorrows and joys.' Manning takes Draper's point further:

> Our pleasure in most books is caused mainly by recognition; and when we say of any notion or idea that it is profoundly true we mean scarcely more than that we have thought, at one time or another, in a similar way ourselves. The appeal of a book is consequently personal and directed to the individual; and its greatness is indicated, roughly, not by the number but by the variety of the minds upon which the appeal is effective.

It follows that since there are certain unchanging conditions, emotions and instincts of life, common to all mankind, 'there would seem to be a time in the lives of all men', Manning adds, 'when they look upon the world, the transient and ineffectual existence of humanity, from a point of view which is in all cases identical.' Similarly Dr Johnson, in his *Life of Gray*,

identified from the 'Elegy', 'sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo.' However this does not go far enough for Manning who knows that there are many aspects to recognition and to truth, and great poets are great because they represent more than others do the change and variety in life.

This preamble, culminating in the distinction Manning makes between common and exceptional conditions of life, leads into Petrarch's confessional dialogue with St. Augustine on the consequences of his idealised love for Laura, matched by Draper against another expression of love in literature, by Tennyson. Manning quotes an instance of devotional love from Shakespeare to undercut Draper's example:

> 'That loss is common would not make
> My own less bitter, rather more [:].'[8]

Manning reads into Tennyson's lines an allusion to one of the finest examples of dramatic irony in Shakespeare, when Hamlet interprets from his mother's words that his overwhelming sorrow is not shared by her, the one person who should share it with him. But when Manning compares Shakespeare's richness and variety with the lines of Tennyson and the whole passage in which they occur, the latter seem flat and general, and he misses the revelation of character made under Hamlet's spontaneous excitable emotion which, simply because it is definite and objective, draws Manning's immediately sympathetic response. His lengthy conclusion is:

> An emotional experience will never interest us simply because it is common; it interests us only in so far as we see it in relation to some particular person; and when Tennyson catalogues the possible causes of death and its possible consequences in that passage of his poem which ends with the lines:
>
> "Was drowned [*sic*] in passing through [*sic*] the ford,
> Or killed [*sic*] in falling from his horse."[9]
>
> we are not impressed simply because in the absence of any definite detail our emotion does not find an objective. We are

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[8] Alfred Tennyson, *In Memoriam A.H.H.*, VI, 81-82.

[9] *ibid.*, lines 115-16.

> inclined to feel, on reading *In Memoriam*, that what we may term the functional crisis has passed away, and that reason is seeking to deal with what are only the traces of an emotion that has ceased to be active.

This is certainly not the case for Manning with Petrarch's *Secretum*, partly because the dialogue form gives a dramatic quality to this "three days' discussion concerning Contempt of the World", but mostly because the discussion never separates itself from the character of Petrarch. In the alternating passages of praise and remorse the poet's relations with Laura relentlessly tend toward self-abasement, while she remains a 'figure of singular strength and sweetness.' The Petrarchan tradition of love-poetry, to deify or idealize the object of one's passion through a purifying spiritual experience, has been a commonplace in literature for centuries. But from Manning's reading of *Secretum*, with Petrarch's

> whole personality being revealed to us and the springs of action laid bare, a sympathy remains with us; and our feeling is less one of condemnation toward Petrarch than one of passionate protest against the attitude of the medieval mind toward humanity, and against the doctrine which saw perfection only in the absolute divorce of the spiritual nature from the substance of life.

For Manning Petrarch was a man in whom the old ideals, formed into conventions, resisted the coming of a new age. It is the conflict in him of these two opposed forces and the consequent cultivation of both; the continual effort to preserve a perfect balance, that constitutes his charm for people of Manning's sensibility. Manning submits that since the words which St. Augustine uses in *Secretum* have been put into his mouth by Petrarch they should, to a certain extent, be accepted as contrived for Petrarch's confession. There follows a remarkably candid statement by Manning about himself:

> We know from our own experience how this scrupulous and fastidious spirit expresses itself in real life, seeking always a compromise between opposites, often deluded by its desires, and passing easily from enthusiasm into disillusion. Its very weakness attracts us. With its slight taint of amiable vanity, its somewhat rhetorical ambition, its desire and effort to please, its surrender to voluptuous melancholy, it cannot fail

> to charm. And when we speak of Petrarch's voluptuous melancholy we are reminded that there may be even a subtle pleasure in repentance, a mood of profound egotism in which we consider ourselves as separated from our fellows and marked for a peculiar fate.

Immediately following Manning adds, 'in such moods the Augustinian doctrine of grace and predestination reveal endless possibilities. But whatever we may think of the theology expounded in *Petrarch's Secret*, we cannot but be fascinated by that conflict of self-questioning, that intimate revelation of the indwelling soul; [...] with our own questions to ask and answer.' One must surely conclude that Manning's engagement with this discourse on self-analysis is what leads him into making his own confession.

As stated at the beginning of the review of *Petrarch's Secret*, the theme of *Secretum* is reproduced by Manning in a sequence from his war novel *The Middle Parts of Fortune*.[10] There he uses two contrasting characters, Sergeant Tozer and Sergeant-Major Tomlinson, products of the military system, to represent diverging attitudes on matters controversial in army thinking, namely the source of the volunteer's motivation and its opposite, the disposition to avoid active service. Private Bourne, Manning's alter ego in the book, reflects upon this friction incisively:

> War, which had tested and had wrecked already so many conventions, tested not so much the general truth of a proposition, as its truth in relation to each and every individual case; and Bourne thought of many men, even men of rank, with military antecedents, whose honour, as the war increased its scope, had become a fugitive and cloistered virtue, though it would probably renew its lustre again in more costermonger times.

Sergeant-Major Tomlinson is described by Corporal (later Sergeant) Tozer as, 'that bloody old colour-sergeant in the orderly room.' The colour-sergeant, of 'pensionable years', his title 'being merely reminiscent of the

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[10] Frederic Manning, *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, [1929], (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), pp.2-4, 23-25, 73-76, *et al.*

rank, abolished earlier, with which he had retired from the previous army,' is widely disliked for his unctuous manner, and is openly seeking his discharge. Meanwhile a young officer, Mr. Clinton, who is 'such a good fellow; he had been through some of the worst shows on the Somme, and he had never spared himself', is known to Private Bourne from Bourne's early training days when Clinton had earned Bourne's liking and respect. This regard increases as Clinton proves himself, in battle, to be a worthy leader of men. After a period of sick leave Clinton is ordered by an officious adjutant to lead a working-party carrying equipment into the front line. Clinton has a premonition he will not survive this detail and while on it is killed by a shell blast. Coincidently with this news Bourne also hears that:

> The colour-sergeant had succeeded in working his ticket, it had gone through, as they phrased it, and he was leaving for home that night. He enhanced his own pleasure by expatiating on the many years of usefulness which still lay in front of his subordinates, a prospect which did not move them in the same way: and his purring satisfaction seemed to make it more difficult for them to find suitable words in which to express their regret at his departure. Congratulations on his release came more readily to their tongues. Bourne said nothing at all; as far as he was concerned in the matter, he was glad the old hypocrite was going; but he couldn't think of anything except the fate of poor Clinton, who had always been so decent to him. He wanted to see Sergeant Tozer and hear what had happened.

Tozer is a fatalist about both war and life. He tells Bourne,

> 'You know, to my way o' thinkin' some of us 'ns 'ave a dam' sight more religion than some o' the parsons who preach at us. We're willin' to take a chance, we are. 'uman nature's 'uman nature, an' you may be right or you may be wrong, but if you bloody well think you're right, you may as well get on with it. What does it matter if y'are killed? You've got to die some day.'

About those who claim that war is a waste of life he retorts, 'They think its all about nothin', I suppose.' He sees the older recruits being 'pushed' into service as representing the kind who talk thus and who protest there should be no war, as though that would help matters. But Tozer asserts that 'when you send 'em over the top with a rifle, an' a bayonet, an' a few bombs, an' they find a big buck 'un in front o' them, they don't care a fuck about wastin' the other bugger's life, do they?' He believes that nearly any

coward or conscientious objector 'at 'ome 'd fight like rats if they was cornered.' Meanwhile when it comes to principle, who has the finer? Is it conceivable that volunteers such as he would go through all this for 'seven bloody bob a week'? Bourne is comforted and uplifted by the effort this hard-headed realist has made on his behalf, and shows commendable restraint in his deference to Tozer's home-spun philosophy. In an earlier exchange of opinion with Tozer he had 'wisely refrained' from expressing his views from a different angle, 'for fear of seeming to imply that the corporal's standard of conduct in these matters was necessarily inferior because it was different. After all, honour, in that connection, is only an elaborate refinement of what are the decent instincts of the average man.' In this later case Bourne privately adds his own intellectual cast to the situation:

> Bourne appreciated Sergeant Tozer's point of view, because he understood the implications his words were intended to convey, even when he seemed to wander from the point. Life was a hazard enveloped in mystery, and war quickened the sense of both in men; the soldier also, as well as the saint, might write his tractate *de contemptu mundi*, and differ from him only in the angle and spirit from which he surveyed the same bleak reality.

As already noted, Manning has stated when observing the interaction between St Augustine and Petrarch, 'we cannot but be fascinated by the conflict of self-questioning, that intimate revelation of the indwelling soul', identified and further explored by Manning in the character of Sergeant Tozer which affirms, 'the Augustinian doctrine of grace and predestination reveal[s] endless possibilities.'

The next review of 10 January, 1914, pp.58-59, analyses a selection from Carducci, accompanied by verse translations, notes, and three introductory essays. Manning finds 'the selection is effective and well chosen; and the essay on the metres of the *Odi Barbari* [the *Barbarian Odes* written by Carducci between 1873 and 1889] a careful analysis of Carducci's attempts to render ancient classical metres in modern accentual verse.' But he believes 'Carducci's excellence is mainly formal.' The 'defect of formal

poetry' in Manning's opinion, is that it does not arise directly and spontaneously out of an actual or potential experience. Rather, in style, in versification, and mostly in thought too, it is almost wholly imitative. Since formal poetry lacks the 'native impulse' it turns to the great masterpieces and tries to imitate them at some chosen moment, forgetting or ignoring that the beauty of the experience is not wholly in such moments, but is also in what precedes and what completes them.

Manning believes that poets who have written on their own art have attempted, as a rule, to justify their defects and to promote them as means for reinforcing their strengths. Carducci attacked the sensuousness in poetry for having a natural tendency toward excess and saw a restraining effect in classical verse forms. But Manning places the measure and value of restraint in proportion to the forces controlled by it, and of all the nations, he considers the Greeks most delighted in sensuous impressions, which the restraint only intensified and defined. Hence, he asserts:

> It is not, we think, that Carducci deliberately attempted to rationalize emotion, but that his own nature was incapable of sympathy with its spiritual or sensuous aspects; and he sought after form as a quality which to some extent remedied the deficiency. [However Carducci's emotion] is strong and passionate when [he] is formulating the ideas of his age and nation. Liberty, Italy, Humanity, rouse him to an enthusiasm capable of informing even an Italian rhetoric, and that probably is his greatest gift to Italy and to the world.

Manning realises that succeeding generations do not attach to ideals and aspirations the same value accorded to them in their own day, but for all that Carducci will be always interesting as a master of form and style.

To praise poets one minute and report the intrigues of the Borgia family the next (19 October, 1912, pp.601-01 and 25 April, 1914, pp.702-03) shows mental agility, wide interests and intellectual adaptability. History has taken a most unfavourable view of the Borgias. 'They typify for us all that was enormous, luxurious, and carnal in the Renaissance, but their

history moves us because it has the proportion and completeness of a tragedy. [...] But', Manning cautions, 'the picturesque elements of character should not be allowed to influence us unduly.' As Manning says in the reviews following:

> It is possible, after all, to be quite just to Cesare's great abilities without seeking to extenuate his crimes. [...] and it is more profitable for us to consider the genius of a man [...] than his other characterists.

He borrows this sentiment from a paper on *Shelley's View of Poetry*, by Dr A.C. Bradley, 'perhaps the sanest and the most clear-sighted critic of our own time', who states 'always we get most from the *genius* in a man of genius, and not from the rest of him,' quoted by Manning in an earlier dated review on Shelley.

The four books about the Borgia family, which Manning review, mainly devoted to Rodrigo (Pope Alexander VI) and his son Cesare, include one by the popular novelist Rafael Sabatini. Manning praises the others' efforts for their scholarship (one being a translator of Burchard's Diary), impartiality and competence, whereas of Sabatini's book he writes that

> while it has none of the merits [of the least of the others], has all its defects, and a great many additional ones. [...] Mr. Sabatini is an apologist for the Borgias, and the view he takes with regard to every crime with which Cesare has been accused is either that Cesare is innocent or that he cannot be proved guilty, or, if he can be proved guilty, then that his action was dictated by motives of political expediency and sanctioned by the common usage of the time.

Manning sees in Sabatini those shortcomings, bias and extreme sensitivity, for which he had previously castigated Balzac. Much of Manning's criticism centres upon the unsolved murder of Juan Borgia, Cesare's brother and Alexander's favourite; a death which greatly assisted Cesare's prospects, and for which tradition, backed by some cautious contemporary reasoning, holds him responsible but without proof. Manning's well balanced argument concludes that 'tradition should be respected until definite evidence is produced against it,' and his distaste for Sabatini's shallow interpretation

of the facts provokes him to class the book 'among those sensational and romantic biographies with which we are being inundated continually.'

Apologias which see the Borgias as no worse than their age, and censures which contend that their relationship with the church called for better conduct, are both only partial truths in Manning's judgment. The Papal Court of Alexander VI was scandalous even in its own time. There must have been substance in contemporary gossip, drawn from 'some moderately healthy public opinion; and in the face of the evidence it is absurd to say that Alexander did not do these things, and if he did them everybody else did them also.' On the other hand the Papacy was then little more than a secular principality. Its spiritual power had been weakened by the arrogance of earlier Popes and by the removal of the Papacy to Avignon. Meanwhile the growth of nationalities had brought out a new spirit of civil independence. On the return of the Papacy to Rome the political situation in Italy had changed completely, and in place of the old communities which conceded some measure of Papal authority, the Popes were surrounded by numerous petty despots. The conditions, in short, were

> no longer those of Dante's *De Monarchia*; they had already become, for Italy as for the rest of Europe, the conditions of Machiavelli's *Principe*. Apart from the political anarchy occasioned by the disintegration of the Empire, and the decay of the Pope's spiritual supremacy, there was the moral crisis caused by the diffusion of the New Learning, a momentary loss of equilibrium inseparable from such movements.

In closing Manning makes an observation which may be applied equally to present day problems:

> Society had become possessed of a culture which greatly exceeded its civilization, and which the forms of that civilization could not contain or assimilate.

The shock to the social structure caused at that time by the 'New Learning' is repeated now, not by a revival but by a degradation of intellect, through the uncontrolled development of communications technolgy and its derivatives.

This invasion into, and influence upon, all levels of society, from the globalisation plan to the rise of multi-national and corporate business and to most elements of domestic life, is a paradigm of Manning's declaration above, by being an invasion which institutes a culture greatly exceeding the civilization spawning it. Meanwhile politicians and social reformers are unequal to the task of containing or assimilating or legislating against these changes. Therefore the 'momentary loss of equilibrium inseparable from such movements' is inducing a 'moral crisis' much greater that that faced by Pope Alexander VI.

Another of Manning's great men is Lorenzo de' Medici, a contemporary of Cesare Borgia, who is contrasted against the other 'as he appears even in his most favourable aspect.' Of Lorenzo he write:

> There is in the Florentine a sunniness of temperament, a constant grace and charm, a variety and life which make him the supreme expression of the Italian Renaissance; and against him we have to set one who is, for all his apparently winning manner, a tragic and sombre figure, singularly tenacious, secret and quick, without illusions or scruples or ideals.

The tolerance which Manning is frequently prepared to show toward a gifted though mainly reprehensible character he extends even to Cesare Borgia. His view is that the Papacy, from which Cesare at first derived his strength, became ultimately a source of weakness to him. It did not devolve naturally, but passed as a prize from one family to another, a power which might be captured but could not be retained. It was from this insecurity of tenure that its worst evils originated, since every family used its power for their own aggrandisement, and none held it sufficiently long to gain complete mastery over the others. This was Cesare's problem, and it required for its solution an extraordinary rapidity, ruthless measures, and untiring energy. Had Alexander lived a few more years, Manning believes Cesare might have consolidated his position and become strong enough to coerce his father's successors, and to restrict the authority of the Church within its proper limits.

Israel Zangwill wrote a book entitled *Italian Fantasies* which Manning, in his review of 20 May, 1911, at page 772, flippantly re-titled 'Mr. Zangwill's Fantasies.' Zangwill is chiefly remembered as a writer on Jewish affairs. On this occasion his excursion into matters Italian leaves Manning irritated:

> It is a wide survey, which gives Mr Zangwill ample scope for the exercise of his peculiar powers; and we believe that the only two subjects of any importance which he has neglected to mention are the nebular hypothesis and the practice of exogamy among the tribes of Central Australia. We may be wrong. Mr Zangwill mentions totemism, taboo, parthenogenesis, and Lord Acton on the inherent machiavellism of the greatest happiness principle; he writes about the absurdity of astronomy, the emptiness of religions, the irrelevancy of science, the futility of culture, the irony of institutions, the hypocrisy of politics, the myth of history, the fiction of chronology, the failure of society, and the impossibility of socialism. These are some of the sub-titles of his essays; and if, among all this wealth of material, we should have overlooked his reference to the two subjects mentioned, Mr Zangwill surely will forgive us.

He does not agree with much in the book, in which the point of view often seems to him to be too narrow, too prejudiced, to be sound. An example is Zangwill's criticism of St. Francis, another of Manning's heroes, as will be seen in the next chapter here. He can accept a criticism of St. Francis in which sympathy is mixed with irony, but he cannot understand one based almost entirely upon an unintelligent contempt;

> and when Mr Zangwill tells us that the little poor man's life was a plagiarism, and a failure at that, we can only say we think he errs, and, smiling urbanely, turn the pages, until we come to that essay in which the author tells us, not without a certain pride, that a Jew invented Esperanto.

Manning admits his severity, attributing it to his repugnance for the faults he sees in Zangwill's style and tone, but tempers it by conceding that some of the subjects are handled ably, and the author is at least provocative.

A book of a totally different kind completes this group of reviews on the literature and history of France and Italy. The *Memoirs of Countess Golovine* translated from the French and reviewed on 17 April, 1911 at pages 930-31 is, in fact, neither French nor Italian, but is 'a record of Russian

life and manners in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.' However, this book too contains material which Manning should have absorbed for his own use. The Countess Golovine's reminiscences of Russian Court life, as companion to the Grand Duchess (later Empress) Elizabeth Alexieievna, provide valuable first hand instruction to Manning on the workings of a different aristocratic society, and are transformable into ideas central to the plot and characterisation of his romance *The Golden Coach*, upon which he was currently working. Manning records his debt in a letter to his friend James Fairfax:

> Try and get, in French *The Memoirs of the Countess Golovine.* I think the woman is a genius, in spite of her principles, and morals, which are so dull![11]

His review is much more catty:

> Madame Golovine does not pour out her confessions, with that curious egotism so characteristic of the feminine mind, to an inquisitive world. On the contrary, about herself she is wonderfully reticent, though here and there she may mention her own pride, her own unimpeachable propriety, her disinterestedness, and her strong independence of character. She is less reserved, and, perhaps, more candid, about her friends.

That cameo rivals Mark Antony's damning of Brutus with faint praise.

There is, nevertheless, a sense of relish and relaxation in Manning's reading of the Countess's book. To the other ladies of the Court she was

> not only a dragon of virtue [...] she was a charming woman, intelligent and gifted, and was often herself [their] only entertainment [...]. She drew very well and composed delightful songs, which she sang to her own accompaniment on the piano. Moreover, she was on the watch for all the literary novelties in Europe, which [...] were known at her house as soon as they were in Paris.

Her engaging style pleases Manning despite her typical Russian pessimism and melancholy. She describes with verve journeys through the steppes, contrasting remote Cossack out-stations against the Asiatic luxury of high society in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Among her pen portraits she includes

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[11] Fairfax papers, No.90, letter dated 12 May, 1911.

a gallery of those strangely fascinating people who embody the mystery of the East while affecting the culture of Paris. One such is

> Madame de Witt, afterwards Princess Potoçka, who was bought as a slave for a few piastres by Boscamp, envoy of the King of Poland; became the wife of Colonel de Witt; was divorced by him; and then married the richest man in Poland, Count Felix Potoçki.

Judging by what survives of *The Golden Coach*, one could well believe that the Countess Golovine's memoirs could have propelled Manning toward its completion.

There follow the criticisms of two books (22 October, 1910, pp.651-52 and 22 April, 1911, pp.602-03) on the Etruscan and Greek heritage from the ancient world. The response they draw from Manning is mainly satisfaction in providing his readers with some further tuition. The Etruscan effort is an account of the author's pilgrimage to the remains of some of that civilisation's less frequented cities, but because he digresses into discussion of the origin, language and history of the Etruscans, which Manning considers ill-informed, the book is judged to trifle with an otherwise well meant intention. Manning's own comments on the Etruscans are instructive and entertaining. The other book is a collection of essays by an academic about the Greek influence on English poetry, published posthumously. Manning implies that the author had been contentious among his peers during his lifetime, but whatever faults he had, and they appear in this publication, 'the cause of learning could have borne more patiently the loss of some of his opponents.' In summary he believes it is a mistake to look upon every subsequent literature as merely a continuation of the Greek, that 'the principle of growth is in ourselves, and that we had begun to evolve a national poetry when the light of Greece was eclipsed.'

An article on two books about William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, and the question of its multiple authorship (27 July, 1912, pp.130-31), precedes several reviews of publications on other distinguished English writers. The

first of the Langland books, by Dorothy L. Owen, argues in favour of the unity of authorship theory through its findings from a comparison between the style and content of several allegories by particular French medieval poets and the text of *Piers Plowman*. In Manning's opinion the already strong case thus presented is further strengthened by the weak argument Arthur Burrell takes up in the second book supporting the opposing view of up to five separate authors. Manning's own reading of the poem sees it as

> the record of a man's whole spiritual experience; the record not of a single incident or of the development of a single action to any culminating crisis, but of a continuous flux of ideas, moods, images, desires, and dreams, bent, broken, or extinguished entirely by the irrational element of life; and such unity as the poem has is the unity, not of an artistic work, but of a human life.

Therefore, the qualities *Piers Plowman* displays are, he believes, 'not common qualities, and it is extremely improbable that, within the space of thirty years, England should have produced five poets possessed of them in such an eminent degree.' This latter book is one of the 'Everyman's Library' series, being, in the words of its author, 'a version for the modern reader.' That attribution Manning bemoans because:

> It is a little depressing to think of 'the versions for modern readers' which these cheap and popular series disseminate among a public incapable of subjecting them to any critical test.

While the implied embargo is understandable, coming from the scholarly Manning, its limitation against some knowledge in preference to none, among readers less practised than himself, or disadvantaged by lack of access to authoritative works, is questionable.

Criticism of *The Chief Elizabethan Dramatists* (30 March, 1912, pp.514-15) affords Manning the opportunity to express his tender regard for the period in literature he probably most loves. The aims stated in this volume are to present examples from the works of Shakespeare's most important contemporaries and to present their most distinguished plays, regarded merely from the point of view of their intrinsic value. The selection really

becomes the canon for that period, omitting Shakespeare, because it comprises works by Lyly, Peele, Greene, Marlowe, Kyd, Chapman, Jonson, Dekker, Marston, Heywood, Beaumont, Fletcher, Webster, Middleton, Massinger, Ford, and Shirley. Manning praises the book for being most useful, both to the average reader and to the student who wishes to gain a general idea of the Elizabethan drama apart from Shakespeare. From his own reading he sees, with the exception that Surrey's verse is absent, that the whole development of the metre in Renaissance English lies within the compass of the volume; that the development is the direct result of the need for dramatic utterance, which in turn depends upon the technicalities of blank verse, cadence, pause and stress, to break

> the unity of the line, drawing the sense out from one line to another, and developing the stress which was a native feature of English verse. But, since the immediate impact is as necessary to dramatic art as to the poetic image, they did not sacrifice the line so completely as Milton did in the creation of those long and stately evolutions of rhythmical sound.

He adds that it is still the musical variety which the single line is capable of expressing that delights the Elizabethan writers, and it is in isolated and separate lines that they love to express a poetic idea, so that it strikes upon the reader with dramatic surprise. Moreover, Manning believes, it is in the structure of the individual line that the secret of the larger rhythm consists, and it is because later writers neglect this fact that the impact of their large rhythmical passages fails. Generally, Manning declares:

> Where literature differs from the other fine arts is simply in its material, which is not inert or inarticulate as the material of other arts; it is a material which, even before the artist touches it, is composed of *eidola*.

But in the particular:

> It is when we consider the Elizabethans as masters of the technique of poetry that we praise in them their true greatness. When we consider them as dramatists we can only praise them with many reservations.

He goes on the cite examples justifying those reservations, but adds that 'at every turn we come upon moments of pure comedy or poignant grief.' He

believes that they learned their tragedies and comedies from their own experiences. Several of them lived rashly and, still young, met violent ends. For example he cites:

> Greene [died] at thirty-two [1558-92, thirty-four?], leaving the following letter to his deserted wife: "Doll, I charge thee by the love of our youth and by my soul's rest that thou wilt see this man paid, for if he and his wife had not succoured me I had died in the streets." That glance backward upon life, and forward to the "soul's rest," needs no comment. It is too full of tears. In spite of the mud and tarnished glories, we look back upon them all echoing the words of Nash: "If there be any sparke of Adam's paradized perfection yet emberd up in the breastes of mortall men, certainely God hath bestowed that his perfectest image on poets." Then we smile again.

This résumé progresses to reviews of works on Milton, Johnson and Gray (16 April, 1910, pp.625-26; 27 June, 1914, pp.1091-92 and 13 April, 1913, pp.586-87 respectively). The first of these, *Milton: Paradise Lost*, is edited by A.W. Verity. The article opens with a long eulogy on Milton and closes with a short contention against Verity. Those differences of opinion begin with Manning's preference for a retention of the old spelling and the old system of punctuation because they may be used to determine a point of syntax, the punctuated line also contributing to what 'most poets would consider [...] an essential part of its music.' He questions Verity's gloss on Milton's words, 'a fit quantity of syllables', believing Milton meant 'quantity' in number as distinct from accent, and quotes Masson in support:

> "There are degrees of stress in good reading even in the syllables called strong or accented, some *a* syllables being twice or even thrice as long as others reckoned as *a*." 'Rain,' for instance, is sensibly longer than 'ran', though both be accented; and similarly with all open vowels. It is in such niceties of ear that Milton excelled.

Finally he disagrees with Verity in calling Milton 'the last of the Elizabethans' or, in passing, with J.A. Symonds's appellation of 'the heir of the Elizabethans.' Whereas the dramatic blank verse of the Elizabethans depended for its variety upon the diverse voices and gestures of the actors, the epic form has none of these aids, and instead had to supply larger and more various rhythms. From this standpoint at least, Manning states, the

advent of *Paradise Lost* was a revolution in English poetry. He illustrates that point by saying:

> If we read one of the most gorgeous descriptive passages in Shakespeare, where Enobarbus describes the meeting of Antony with Cleopatra, and compare it with Milton upon the uplifting of the infernal standard, we are able to realise the advance. Milton invented new harmonies. If Shakespeare be myriad-minded, Milton, in the phrase of Tennyson, is the "mighty-mouthed."

The Age of Johnson is a volume from *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, reviewed on 27 June, 1914 at pages 1091-92, and includes many more eighteenth century writers than Samuel Johnson. However Manning identifies a standard of 'obstinate rationality' prevalent among them. The great mass of literature produced then was thoroughly efficient, he asserts. Letters were polite. There was a standard, and if that standard imposed many irksome restrictions, it also cultivated a sense of proportion and dignity. It is precisely Johnson's stubborn and unswerving commonsense which makes him the century's standard for 'obstinate rationality'. As an example of Johnson's uncompromising posture, Manning compares his attitude to religion with that of Coleridge:

> "Pray God," wrote the latter to a friend, "that he [*sic*] may grant me a living and not merely a reasoning faith." Johnson would no more bandy arguments with his God than he would bandy compliments with his King.

Manning concedes that Johnson is read less often than is Boswell; but Boswell is Johnson, a medium through whom to approach one, 'the very greatness of whose personality has tended to interfere with the recognition of his greatness as a man of letters,' a quotation Manning takes from the chapter 'Johnson and Boswell' within the volume. Among others, Thomas Gray is given special praise for the diversity of his inspiration through his poems from the Icelandic, and his dedication to Provençal poetry and to Dante. While all chapters maintain 'the general standard of excellence', the first three, for example, headed 'Richardson', 'Fielding and Smollett' and 'Sterne', which give 'the history of one of the most remarkable literary developments of

their age, and show us in what sense M. Anatole France's description of England as the home of the novel is true,' set an admirable foundation for the remainder of the volume.

Thomas Gray comes under direct scrutiny through the appraisement of an edition of his *Essays and Criticisms*, (13 April, 1912, pp.586-87). Manning applauds his prose for 'its simplicity and lack of emphasis. In Gray's own estimate 'the style he aimed at was "extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical"; and while his prose has a great measure of all these qualities, in conciseness and purity it has not been surpassed.' Again Manning uses Coleridge as a comparison, this time to emphasise Gray's eloquence, clarity and economy. In fact he frequently contrasts Coleridge against Gray to promote the evidence of Gray's scholarship, his appreciation of 'the progress of poesy', his stronger character, and his reticence and sincerity against Coleridge's egotism and pursuit after histrionic effect. It is Gray's reticence, along with the imperfections in his *Elegy*, which Matthew Arnold deplored. Manning is 'willing to admit that the odes show a greater mastery of art, and that Gray was conscious of this' but, perhaps deprecatingly in view of his respect for Arnold, Manning believes Arnold 'stood too closely under the shadow of Wordsworth [himself a detractor of Gray] to be altogether fair to Gray.' Manning's assessment is:

> That he produced so little may be attributed as much to his own character, with its melancholy and its fastidiousness, as to the character of his age. "My mind is comprehensive in its conceptions and wastes itself in the contemplation of the innumerable things which it might do," wrote Coleridge. Gray's mind was equally comprehensive and better organised, but "les voluptés d'un coeur mélancholique" prevented its effort. His total production in verse and prose was so slight, even when the letters are included, that a selection seems almost unnecessary.

Much of that summary could well be Manning commenting about himself. The assemblage of essays and letters comprising this book he recommends as a 'companionable, and a pocketable volume.'

The Poetical Works of William Blake, next discussed (4 April, 1914, p.567), is from the 'Oxford Edition of Standard Authors.' As an introduction to Blake's poetry Manning claims there is in all great poetry an irrational quality, difficult to analyse and define. It is present, to some extent, in the more intellectual forms of dramatic and epic poetry, but it is most evident in the lyric. He terms it irrational because it is experienced only in conditions of intoxication or ecstasy, when the reasoning faculty is momentarily paralysed, and the mind, to paraphrase Dante, becomes almost divine in its vision. Once these conditions cease to exist the experience itself ceases. In the case of an epic or of a dramatic poem the mind is capable of reconstructing its broad structural features, but in lyrical poetry this kind of structure is not essential, because the mechanical relation of cause and effect, inseparable from the presentation of character in action, is not essential. He reminds us that Aristotle's *Poetics* does not examine the question of lyric poetry, but if the Aristotelian theory of *mimesis* as the function of all fine art is accepted, then the mimetic character of lyrical poetry would seem to approach that of music rather than that of dramatic and epic poetry. That is, if music represents certain spiritual moods and emotions, it does so by inducing similar moods and emotions in the listener, and the *mimesis* being subjective, the *katharsis* is more complete.

Manning presses the analogy further between lyrical poetry and music, while allowing for the slight difference in the medium and the object, of lyric poetry. Lyric form liberates the natural emotions which habit and custom have restrained in one, by releasing and stimulating the potentialities of one's own emotional nature. The lyrical is not bound by conditions of reality and actuality in the same way as are dramatic and, to a lesser degree, epic poetry. Its world is an ideal world. It is also more elusive, and though the structure of epic and tragedy is not essential to the

lyric, it must, in common with every other form of poetry, have the unity of a single and continuous movement. Manning's contention is that the poetry of Blake is saturated with this irrational quality.

With that theory behind him, Manning illustrates its practice by Blake with examples from 'The Book of Thel', 'Songs of Innocence' and 'The French Revolution'. Blake's value to him

> is not simply that he was a visionary, a prophet of the Revolution, or the worshipper of any other chimera.

Manning recognises the irrational element, whether as emotional vision or pure emotion, as an element essential to any further progress. And ever alert to taking analysis another step, he sees here innovation involved:

> The *vers libres* and broken rhythms which Blake used are sufficient to show, however primitive they may seem to us now, that the music of lyrical poetry is not necessarily the music of metre. To put it another way, lyrical poetry has much to gain by following the free rhythms of music; and the revolt against metre, involved in such a method, has, after all, the sanction of Shelley, of Sir Philip Sidney, and of the first critic of poetry, Aristotle.

In the discussion of Manning's major prose works in the next chapter here, the case will be put that he incorporates 'irrational quality' and 'the revolt against metre' into the lyrical prose of *The Middle Parts of Fortune.*

The Spectator of 19 August, 1911, p.283, includes a brief review of *Samuel Rogers and His Circle.* Manning writes, 'It is chiefly as the friend of Fox, Byron, Sydney Smith, the Lake poets, the convivial Porson, "Anacreon" Moore, and Macaulay that Rogers is interesting.' To the author 'Rogers the poet is an entirely subordinate person, and his poetry is considered, if not frankly an amiable indiscretion, then merely as an elegant accomplishment.' Although Manning finds this estimate of his work 'perhaps too modest', he values the publication for its record of Rogers's stinging wit, which spared no one, and his genius for friendship, which contribute to the survival of many amusing literary anecdotes.

Two articles from 23 September, 1911, at pages 458-59, and 21 December, 1912, at pages 1063-64 respectively, deal with the letters and the poetry of S.T. Coleridge. The first of these, adapting its title to Coleridge's own Latinising, is *Coleridge's Biographia Epistolaris* edited by A. Turnbull. Manning regards these letters as being

> not so much the expression of a personality as the expression of ideas, a method of teaching, rather than of communication, monologues which scarcely reveal at all the characters of those to whom they were addressed.

Manning, an energetic letter writer himself, believes that like conversation, letter writing is one of the social arts, to excel in which one needs an urbane tolerance, a sympathy with diverse intelligences, and an absence of preconceived and inflexible opinions, which are all qualities alien to Coleridge's mental egotism. Coleridge's letters communicate at a different level entirely. With his prose in general, 'it is by his complete detachment from the affairs of ordinary life, by an almost incessant application to thought, and to thought in its most abstract form, that Coleridge fails to hold and maintain our interest', whereas his letters 'differ from [the rest of his prose] only because they are a better medium for brilliant digressions and flashes of intuitive clairvoyance in which his genius is shown at its highest power.'

It is as a poet and as a critic of literature that Coleridge is most admired; 'and yet', Manning adds, 'what he achieved in these two fields seems to have been achieved spontaneously and by the way, to be the fruits of his extraordinarily sensuous nature, quick in its appreciation of all the subtleties of colour, of rhythm, and of temperament, less sensitive to form'. Turnbull, the editor, believes the poet in Coleridge was extinguished by a very different thing than opium. Rather, the poetic faculty was suspended through the loss of hope and the growth of his intellect, by the development of his reasoning and philosophic powers, and by the multiplication of the interests which appealed to him along with the many problems which presented

themselves for his solution. This explanation does not altogether satisfy Manning. He thinks 'the evil is deeper', being more of 'an intellectual and moral evil.' He agrees Coleridge's slavery to drugs was not so much the cause as one of the symptoms of his mental disease, a psychological problem. He diagnoses in Coleridge traces of somnambulism, not only as exemplified in 'Kubla Khan' but in various passages of his prose works, and of hyperaesthesia, an over sensitiveness to physical sensations such as colour, light, and sound:

> Yet it was to this exquisitely sensitive, if somewhat unhealthy, apprehension that the great part of his poetic genius belonged. The very confusion between the sleeping and the waking sense lends its magical quality, its luminous and visionary effect to [among other references, passages in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.']

Further, the spontaneous succession of apparently unrelated images, yet with apparent appropriateness, equating with the incoherence usual in dreams, characterises his genius in poetry and reappears as a kind of divination in his criticism, especially in his lectures on Shakespeare which are the genius of his prose. Manning quotes passages from the letters to support his case.

He tends to agree with Turnbull in seeing Coleridge's later, 'more definite purpose', as almost entirely philosophical, meant 'to achieve fame as a teacher of men, an exponent of the permanent and invariable principles which govern the human understanding.' The chief idea seen by Manning to underly that philosophy is the doctrine of the Irrational, the notion that 'not everything in the world is resolvable into Logic and Thought, but that mighty resisting remainders are extant, which perhaps even constitute the most important thing in the world.' He goes on to develop that concept in relation to Coleridge's writing and show the difficulties Coleridge encountered through it, but points out that 'the mystical element - common, in a greater or lesser degree, to all absolute systems - is one of Coleridge's most striking characteristics.' The idea of the absolute as 'something fixed and permanent amid the eternal flux', incorporating the

mystical, is seen as the base upon which Coleridge rests his weak, shifting, singularly acute, yet discontinuous effort. Manning concludes his analysis with the verdict -

> it seems that the whole tragedy of Coleridge's life is [...]: the conflict between the two sides of a dual nature, the attempt to reconcile truth in the mystic with truth in the scientific sense, the curious confusion of two mutually exclusive spheres.

The edition of *Coleridge's Complete Poetical Works* was prepared by Ernest Hartley Coleridge. It includes a few short poems and versions of poems not previously published, considered by Manning to be of 'slight importance' except to justify 'complete' in the title. More interesting is the inclusion of several fragments and experiments in metrical form which 'must be accounted pure gain.' The edition's chief value lies is its exhaustive summary of various readings and its first drafts of poems from manuscripts. Manning rationalises that beautiful as Coleridge's poetry is, 'and those who have once come under the spell never again become quite free from its enchantment', it should be praised only for those qualities which are peculiar to it, and which constitute its genius. Again, as in the previous criticism, he alludes to the nature of Coleridge's material and the character of his mind, the material being not drawn from reality, and the mind being incapable of any constructive imagination. This is a bold charge against the originator of the treatise 'On Fancy and Imagination' in the *Biographia Literaria.* In justification Manning harks back to Gray whose poetic ability he obviously esteems:

> Gray, struggling against the rigid forms of his age, using the conventional epithets of 'poetic diction,' masters them by the sheer intensity of his imagination, and achieves a concrete and definite image in lines so musical that they seem to embody the last felicities of sound. Coleridge could never have written lines of such generous warmth and richness[.]

But against that statement, his contrast between the two poets is one of 'mass and solidity' in Gray's lines against the 'swiftness and fluidity' of Coleridge's. That distinction is not caused by metrical differences but by

the 'management of consonantal and vowel sounds.' It is in the management of vowel sounds that Coleridge attains an extreme fluidity. Although Gray sometimes approaches this fluidity, it is scarcely his aim. 'Coleridge, on the other hand, never approaches to the massive arrangement of consonantal sounds which makes Gray's poetry so impressive; he remains always rare, fine, and delicate.' Manning draws Wordsworth into the contrast with a comparison between his 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' and Coleridge's 'Dejection: An Ode'. Lines 9 to 12 ('the most beautiful'), and 42 to 48 ('the gravest and deepest') in Coleridge's work, stand out in Manning's appreciation. Wordsworth, 'a kind of English Lucretius', is at his greatest, exampled in his 'Ode', 'when he gets beyond the show of things, when his thought is bare; then it is that his verse gains the solemnity of Lucretius and thrills with ecstasy, brooding over eternal abysses.' Turning from the links between Coleridge and Wordsworth back again to Gray, Manning approximates Gray to the 'fine and consciously artistic schools of Provence and Sicily' rather than to the two later poets, 'who founded what, for some unknown reason, we call the Romantic School.' Finally he offers his criticism as an appreciation of Coleridge in a new light:

> However delicate and attenuated his poetical genius may have been, it is a genius which owes nothing to any of his predecessors, which is peculiar to himself, which sought and attained a perfect medium of expression, and is, in consequence imperishable.

Manning concludes that the question of how much Coleridge's success is owed to 'curious experiment' may be sufficiently proven from the reading of this 'most scrupulous and admirable' edition by E.H. Coleridge.

The next article (2 July, 1910, pp.22-23) on the poetry of Robert Southey, is disappointing. Manning's opening statement reads:

> A great English poet said that in his style he aimed at an extreme conciseness of expression, yet with purity, perspicacity, and music. These are the qualities which distinguish the work of Southey [...].

The 'great English poet' of that statement is immediately recognisable as

Gray, whose 'aim' is quoted by Manning in a review above, but published later than this one. But he finds in Southey, 'little of the poetic faculty, and less of the historical sense; he is not a prophet with any profound criticism of life to offer us; he does not illuminate his pages with any sudden and wilful felicity of thought or phrase.' Manning locates Southey's chief excellence in the purity and the sustained even flow of his language. He finds something else to Southey's credit - 'in spite of the obtuseness of the biographers, editors, and critics of both poets, the influence of Southey upon Shelley is clearly defined, and was enduring.' Manning traces these influences through the narrative poem 'Thalaba', a favourite of Shelley, to the latter's 'Queen Mab', 'Alastor' and 'The Revolt of Islam', wherein 'voyages through the air, or down great rivers, and over the mysterious sea, favourite devices with Southey to give free play to his descriptive power, became with Shelley an obsession.' The images, symbols and incidents from Southey recurring incessantly in Shelley's work indicate to Manning Southey's influence upon Shelley's generation, and how much greater Southey was by his influence than by his achievement. Also, this influence as a factor in the historical development of English literature is underrated. While the criticism is sympathetic to Southey, and is perceptive, its tone lacks Manning's customary instructive regard for his readers.

More typical of Manning's standards is his review of an edition of Shelley's poetry on 30 December, 1911, at pages 1154-55. His lengthy preamble takes exception to detractors of Arnold's much earlier essay on Shelley, a paper which would have been well read over by then. The gist of the detractors' dissatisfaction with Arnold's essay is concentrated upon its much quoted and misinterpreted closing sentences:

> The Shelley of actual life is a vision of beauty and radiance, indeed, but availing nothing, effecting nothing. And in poetry, no less than in life, he is "a beautiful *and ineffectual* angel,

beating in the void his luminous wings in vain."[12]

Manning mostly directs his attack against one particular cynic, A. Clutton-Brock, writer of the introduction to this edition. In so doing Manning supports Arnold's calmly reasoned convictions which contrast with the other's inflammatory outcry.

Manning partly agrees with Clutton-Brock in one statement that Shelley 'could not represent the triumph of his political ideas in poetry, because poetry is not fit for such a representation.' While Manning accepts that statement as 'unanswerable', he asserts that politics not being a fit subject is no reason for Clutton-Brock to suppose that Shelley did not attempt its poetic representation. On the contrary:

> As Keats said, Shelley was 'not sufficiently an artist,' and one instance of this insufficiency is the fact that he was never fully conscious of the limitations of his art and seldom asked himself whether a subject was or was not susceptible of poetic representation.

But Manning's chief objection is Clutton-Brock's construction of a theory which is not only unnecessary but is fallacious, speaking of the conscious and unconscious minds as though they were two mutually exclusive spheres entirely independent of each other, and opposing poetry to prose in a manner so arbitrary and unjustifiable that

> if we accept his distinction we are driven to think that in no possible circumstances can prose ever be inspired, and all this cumbrous and impossible machinery is erected to prove, what we should have thought was sufficiently obvious, that, in common with the large majority of poets and with all great poets, Shelley's work is informed by a mystical element [...].

He also questions the exactitude in describing Shelley as a 'religious enthusiastic', his reason being 'probably the same as that which led Arnold to describe him as 'ineffectual'. Religion to Manning is 'something more than a mere series of mystical *élans*; it is something abiding and steadfast;

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[12] Matthew Arnold, 'Shelley', *The Nineteenth Century*, January, 1888, a review of Edward Dowden's *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (2 vols., 1886). The passage quoted is Arnold's variation of Joseph Joubert (1754-1824) on Plato.

a secret influence which informs the life governed by it.' He does find it a curious fact in Shelley's poems, that though there is an extraordinary sense of motion, there is never any development. He quotes passages from Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth for their expressions of a religious sense, 'of that feeling of awe which comes from the contemplation of infinity.' He cannot find lines of the same solemnity and weight in Shelley. But he believes that any appreciation of Shelley must attempt also to appreciate those qualities in which he is lacking, and it is extremely ill-advised to treat a criticism which tries to do this, as Clutton-Brock does to Arnold, as though it expressed hostility or contempt, for:

> It is absolutely impossible that any man to whom poetry is as a living thing should speak of the master who wrote *Adonais* and *Prometheus* and *Epipsychidion* with contempt.

There follows a eulogy by Manning on Shelley's poetry which concludes:

> All that nimble and delicate beauty of Earth, clear and intense, which runs through creation, and is continually escaping from us, he follows; and when we follow with him we lose something of the heaviness of our clay. He makes a flame pulse in the blood.

After reading Manning's critique, it seems an odd choice by the editor to have left the introduction to his book in the hands of Clutton-Brock, who misrepresents Shelley on so many points. Perhaps Manning is expressing some repentance, with a sympathetic eye to bookstore sales, when he concludes that Clutton-Brock

> frees himself from the entanglements of his own theories, when he deals imaginatively with Shelley's imagination, he says many extremely suggestive things, for which we would not have him think us ungrateful. We are, for all our 'vivacity,' grateful to him; and grateful also to Mr Locock [the editor], whose valuable notes and careful editing our space forbids us to praise as they deserve.

The next review of 22 June, 1912, at pages 991-92, on a book of selections from Thomas De Quincey, is entitled by Manning 'The Literature of Power.' He derives that name from his listing of various metaphysical distinctions which were studied by early nineteenth century critics, being

'those between the reason and the understanding, the fancy and the imagination, rhetoric and eloquence, and the literature of knowledge and the literature of power.' He believes that those distinctions probably hold less value now than they had for Coleridge, Wordsworth and De Quincey by identifying a certain artificiality in them. However if the distinctions are real, their value is where they invariably break down and reveal their arbitrary value; for reason is a part of the understanding, fancy is included in the imagination, and eloquence comprehends rhetoric, the differences being, as Manning notes Walter Pater had observed, not distinctions but differences of intensity. Furthermore, not only do the lesser and more superficial qualities seem to merge into the greater, but the greater themselves seem also themselves to merge in each other, to be no more than so many modes, or phases or different aspects of a single and indivisible thing. But it is upon the metaphysical distinction, with the line it purports to draw between discursive and intuitive thought, that De Quincey derives his famous distinction between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power.

If, however, as Manning favours, the question is simply one of the intensity with which the imagination evokes its vision of things, then the error is avoided of assuming that the power of influencing the emotions is opposed to and different from the power of inducing the agreement of the mind; and the appeal to the emotions is always most overwhelming and irresistible when the element of reason is strongest in it. Manning instances Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus in the twelfth book of the *Iliad* to illustrate his point.

Two books which De Quincey opposed to each other were Newton's *Principia* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in both of which Manning sees 'a common organic development; and between these two typical examples of the literature

of knowledge and the literature of power there occur a vast number of books, as De Quincey himself recognised, which cannot be assigned to either class with any confidence.' Manning asks then of great literature

> an intensity of imagination by which [...] an idea will be presented to us with the force of a sensation; and we ask, further, that these ideas should have an organic development of their own, a certain dramatic, or even a logical, consequence; and unless we find this intensity spontaneously developing and propagating new ideas until the whole material is penetrated by it we deny its greatness. Questions of form and style are to a certain extent secondary questions, because in the greatest works of art the form, the style, and the matter cannot be be separated from each other; they cease to exist; and the words themselves seem to have no separate existence of their own, so perfectly free and liquid is the ideal development which flows through the language.

The editor of these selections from De Quincey is accused by Manning of praising De Quincey for his rhetorical excellence rather than for any other quality. But Manning sees in De Quincey's rhetoric the vice of romanticism, which seeks no unity of object but only a variety of detail, precisely as a romance passes from one strange incident to another without any development of character, or any cumulative effect upon the mind. And even here De Quincey falters, for by comparison, Charles Lamb with his humour, and Coleridge, by his brilliant flashes of intuitive vision, saved themselves from sentimentalism, 'a parade of false emotions and pious aspirations,' which was characteristic of the age, but from which De Quincey never wholly escapes.

Manning concludes that any selection would be inadequate to express De Quincey's peculiar power. He attained his reputation, not by the possession of any particularly great quality, but by the possession of many smaller qualities. It is

> the diversity of his interest, the inexhaustible facility of his style, his wide and desultory reading, which most attract us; and to appreciate these as they deserve is impossible in any selection. [...] He wrote incessantly, and it is amazing that he should have written so well and preserved in all his criticism such a fine standard of sanity.

Manning's next piece, of 27 June, 1912, at pages 153-54, is a brief report of two books on Thomas Love Peacock, one a *Life* and the other a *Critical Study.* Peacock's novels have, for Manning, a quality unique in English literature. He attributes to them the amused curiosity of the Greek satirist Lucian of Samosata, rather than the fierce mockery of Swift or Sterne's impudent humour. In form 'they are scarcely more than dialogues, elaborate *symposia*, strengthened and relieved by rare descriptive passages, and broken by the wilful intrusion into them of small detached fragments from the eternal comedy of life.' The element in Peacock's comedy not sufficiently appreciated by his critics is, in Manning's opinion, 'the application of the relative spirit to ideas claiming to have an absolute value.' And yet

> it is not only the cause of his continuous, if limited influence; it implies all his other delightful qualities, the amused curiosity, the tolerant scepticism, the fine, penetrating irony, and that sane view of life by which he has gained a right to a place on our shelves not far removed from Horace, or from that French Horace, La Fontaine, whose fables are a miniature theatre, in which the comedy of human life is recorded as finely and as precisely as in the theatre of Molière.

Manning distinguishes Peacock as an Epicurean. To Manning, if one cannot be a Shakespeare or a Dante, being an Epicurean is a worthy consolation prize, one which he is happy to bestow on Peacock. He corrects the biographer's grave error in labelling Peacock 'self-indulgent,' yet in so doing shows the breadth of his eloquence in combining an instructive rebuke against the one with a gracious compliment to the other:

> Peacock would haved dined with Lucullus, but he would have walked home. [...] It was not to him, as to one of his contemporaries, a matter of indifference whether he arrived at his lodgings in 'an horizontal or a perpendicular position.' The Gargantuan enormity of the banquets which he describes is but the hospitality offered to a guest, and in plenty there is choice. Not but what we think he kept himself plump, while his very style breathes the fragrance of a fine vintage. He drank, we may be sure, enough to warm his wits, to make the mind, in Falstaff's phrase, 'forgetive and quick,' but no more. 'Self-indulgence' is a Stoic sneer; in his own words he paid *due* service to Bacchus.

In the rest of the review, on the other *Critical Study* by A. Martin Freeman, Manning believes too much importance is placed upon, what Freeman describes as, the superficial comedy of the novels. Freeman says Peacock cares little or nothing for preliminaries, being anxious to bring together, with as little delay as possible, his company of cranks, and fools and scholars, and make them talk and dance, perform their antics, and display their incongruous peculiarities for his own amusement and that of his readers. But Manning is adamant that what is of permanent value in the novels and keeps them fresh, and will ensure their immortality is precisely the fact that Peacock's company is not composed of cranks and fools. The ideas they express are the ideas to which humanity returns again and again. Apart from this serious reservation, the writer has contributed 'the most charming portrait we have of one of those rare and subtle characters who move quietly through life, unnoticed themselves but noticing all things, kindly, tolerant, sceptical, but above all things human; and of one who resolutely declined to be the dupe of words.'

George Meredith, whose first wife was the widowed daughter of Thomas Love Peacock, is the subject of the next review published on 7 December, 1912, at pages 931-32, through a collection of Meredith's poetry annotated by another of Manning's contemporary famous literary academics in G.M. Trevelyan. Manning concludes that Meredith

> is not to our ear a musical poet; and we can scarcely believe that the qualities which we have praised in him will have the same value for posterity as they appear to have for us.

Meredith's reputation stood high in the early years of the twentieth century but Manning's forecast is borne out by events, for in the last half of the century neither Meredith's poetry nor his novels have received any great popular or critical acclaim.

Those qualities which Manning does praise mostly appear in *Poems and*

Lyrics of the Joy of Earth and *A Reading of Earth.* His appreciation of them derives from an unusual interpretation of poetic inspiration which seems to approach Keats's negative capability[13], in which Manning claims Meredith 'breaks the instrument of language in his hands.' In comparison, where Manning sees Wordsworth consider nature as does a mystic, and Coleridge with always a touch of sensuousness, Meredith does not look upon earth from these points of view at all. Instead

> his intellect, his spiritual nature, even his senses seem to be merged in some profounder and more primitive form of consciousness. He interprets earth to us, not as an individual mind separated and differentiated from the objects of his consciousness, but simply as the sum of that consciousness itself. It is his emotional nature, free and pure, which feels the wonder of earth.

Meredith's response to nature is not to the eye or the ear alone, but to all the senses at once. In the attempt to present all these different qualities simultaneously, Manning adds, of course the interpretation is sensuous, and of course the appeal to the senses is not made, and could not be made, simultaneously, but the effect on the susceptible reader is apparently immediate. This is because the appeal seems in some way to have lost its objectivity, or one's senses seem to have been extended into the objects perceived, so that one does not differentiate oneself from them. As a justification of this process he states:

> We have no right to complain of the means when the object is attained; and we have no right to scrutinize the details separately, when the effect is derived from a rapid accumulation of detail, when the method, that is to say, aims at a cumulative effect.

Small wonder that with such delicacy, Meredith's writing defeats many modern readers.

The merit contained in *Swinburne: a Critical Study*, as observed in the review of 24 July, 1915, at pages 114-15, is that the author, in seeking to

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[13] John Keats, letter to Richard Woodhouse, 27 October, 1818, 'What shocks the virtuous philosop[h]er, delights the c[h]ameleon Poet.' *et al.*

define Swinburne's ability, does so without either claiming for it qualities it does not possess, or attempting to hide the defects of those it does. Manning limits Swinburne's ability to a narrow concentration of talents:

> With Swinburne everything else was sacrificed to the two qualities, which he possessed, perhaps, in a higher degree than any other English poet, splendour and speed. His work is saturated with these qualities. It is not merely that he achieves a splendour of diction and a speed of rhythm. There is little colour in his vision, little tangible form. Rossetti is such a poet as we should expect a painter to be; to Morris life is a tangible as well as a visible thing; but Swinburne represents life to us simply as light and movement. His poetry would seem to exist [...] not for the thing itself, but for its passage through light, through consciousness; and fascinating as these graces are, with their transitory and wilful caprice, they are yet superficial, merely aspects of a more solid reality.

In a comparison Manning makes between Wordsworth and Swinburne, the question is really whether, respectively, poetry as art or poetry as inspiration, is the more satisfying; or, less categorically, whether an inspiration derived from life has a more permanent effect upon us than one derived almost completely from literature. At their best, and on common ground to both poets, in their political sonnets for instance, there should be no hesitation in preferring the dignity and weight of Wordsworth to the vehemence of Swinburne. The reason, Manning thinks,

> is simply that Wordsworth's inspiration was always rooted in reality, while Swinburne's was an abstraction from it, dealing, that is to say, not with reality as a whole, but only with certain exquisitely chosen aspects of it.

Emotion for Swinburne has no need of either motive or object; it exists for itself alone. For example in his *Tristram of Lyonesse* the myth never emerges from the bewildering beauty of detail. 'The splendour and speed, the maagical glamour of that "tonal mistiness," are present at their highest power; but more than ever they are insubordinate and wilful.' Compared as a narrative with Morris's *Jason*, Swinburne's lack of constructive imagination is at once apparent; it has nothing of the dramatic irony present in the scene where Media takes her last look upon her father's palace and reminds Jason of the greatness and sweetness which she is leaving for his sake.

'Beside Morris's Media, Swinburne's Iseult is a disembodied phantom.'

When considering the 'splendour and speed' of Swinburne's thought and language, and the light and movement of his vision, unless one loves him for these qualities, Manning asserts, one has no adequate reason for loving him at all. In common with other poets, he is the great artist when he works according to instinct, as in 'Itylus', the first two choruses of *Atalanta in Calydon*, his sapphics and his choriambics.

William Morris is a writer to whom Manning is much more kindly disposed. In fact Morris is one of his chosen exemplars:

> There are poets whose power and influence are none the less for being tacit and unrecognized. Every principle of growth, whether in art or in life, works in the same deliberate and scarcely perceptible manner. In some respects it may seem foolish to describe Morris as a poet of this order; because his extraordinary power of narrative, the clear brightness and simplicity of his style, and the exquisite inspiration of his lyrical poems were at once recognised. At the same time his work is so perfect in its way that we do not always appreciate its full value; it is so complete an expression of life that in considering it we are apt to forget, or perhaps not to apprehand at all, how complete and satisfying it is as art.

Although, today, Morris's reputation remains largely intact, if below Manning's estimate, there is an element of current criticism which sees his poetry as 'generally lifeless, derivative, and long-winded.'[14] Manning's review of 8 July, 1911, at pages 69-71, commences by appreciating Morris's adaptations of classical and medieval poetry, then advances to a comparison with Morris's contemporary, Swinburne. Each attacked the other vigorously. Swinburne is quoted thus:

> Even had I ever the same impulse to attempt and the same ambition to achieve the enterprise of epic or narrative that I had always felt with regard to lyrical and dramatic work, I could never have proposed to myself the lowly and unambitious aim of competition with the work of so notable a contemporary workman in the humbler branch of that line as William Morris.

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[14] Andrew Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p.430.

Manning explains that the reason for Swinburne's 'characteristic outburst of petulance' derives from criticisms by Mackail and Arnold. A typical Morris retaliation quoted by Manning is:

> But, to confess and be hanged, you know I never could really sympathize with Swinburne's work: it always seemed to me to be founded on literature, not on art. [...] In these days the issue between art, that is, the godlike part of man, and mere bestiality is so momentous, and the surroundings of life are so stern and unplayful, that nothing can take serious hold of people, or should do so, but that which is rooted deepest in reality and is quite at first hand; there is no room for anything which is not forced out of a man of deep feeling because of its innate strength and vision.

Manning sides with Morris, judging this criticism of Swinburne to be 'perfectly just and well-founded,' as well as its implying Morris's 'aims and ideals as a poet.' Morris's forthright conviction in association with his aims and ideals, bears the stamp of Modernism. Manning's regard for him believably counted when writng his own war poetry and his war novel.

Manning declares 'it is no longer with us a question as to whether Swinburne can rival him in narrative; it becomes a question whether Morris is not Swinburne's rival in lyric poetry.' As though in anticipation of later allegations against Morris, Manning claims that all definite traces of the influence of Browning and Tennyson had disappeared from Morris's poetry after 1867; 'he had created his own medium, and his work was absolutely new and original.'

The Wessex Edition of Thomas Hardy's collected works is reviewed in an article headed 'Novels of Character and Environment' on 7 September, 1912, at pages 335 to 337. Hardy, in his preface to the volumes, defends himself against criticism that he is a pessimist and therefore his work is flawed:

> 'Differing natures find their tongue in the presence of differing spectacles. Some natures become vocal at tragedy, some are made vocal by comedy, and it seems to me that to whichever of these aspects of life a writer's instinct for expression the more readily responds, to that he should allow it to respond. That before a contrasting side of things he remains undemonstrative need not be assumed to mean that he remains

unperceiving.'

Manning disagrees with part of this stand. For while sympathetic toward Hardy's protest against the critics' habit of classifying all writers under convenient labels, he develops an alternative view to Hardy from his own conclusion that great art is representative of life, not critical of it:

> The great artist has a delicacy and mobility of mind by which he is able to capture and reflect the most various and fluid moods, to seize upon the contrasting aspects of life and present each with a perfect impartiality. Such a mind is delicate in the way it realizes with an exquisite tact the essential character of every object; and mobile in its range, in the comprehensive nature of its sympathy.

He agrees with Hardy that some natures may be more responsive to the tragedy of life and yet perceive the other side, for one's consciousness is always 'dissolving', and the aspects of life continually changing thereby. On the other hand, a nature which only vocalises tragedy, and perceives another aspect of life without responding to it, is a nature in which the will is unbalanced, and to view life almost entirely in its tragic significance is to view it incompletely. Manning continues that the significance of tragedy is not merely tragic; it leaves upon the mind ideas of 'ultimate compensation and the readjustment of opposed forces,' and when literature ceases to have this effect upon its readers, it ceases to be great literature. It is no longer representative, but didactic. This, he thinks, 'is an objection which may be urged in all fairness against the art of Mr. Hardy.' He adds that not only his critics, but his admirers and disciples, are apt to find in Hardy's work a didactic tendency, and where that tendency is present in his work it is present as a flaw.

Moreover, the kind of tragedy based upon the idea of compensation and readjustment generates new forces which implies naturally a certain activity and freedom of will. Whether that notion, gained from practical experience, is true or false, it is at least sufficiently true to regard oneself as an active agent to whom is allowed a certain freedom of choice, and upon whom

ultimately falls the sole responsibility for the choice. Manning is not concerned here with a philosophic but an artistic conception of truth. He does not wish to be 'involved in the damnation of those who have attributed a consistent philosophy to Mr. Hardy.' To him, Hardy's nature is not a rational but an emotional nature. Thus he draws from Hardy's unbalanced view, Tess Durbeyfield, as an example among several of Hardy's characters, of 'an almost entirely passive character. She interests us, not by what she does or says, but entirely by what she feels, entirely by her capacity for suffering.' As Hardy himself says of her 'Tess's own people down in those retreats are never tired of saying in their fatalistic way: "It was to be." There lay the pity of it.' But for Hardy to shift the responsibility for Tess's catastrophe to God, or Nature, or Fate, or Chance, is a fault in art. For all that, Manning sees *Tess* as a great work of subjectivity, a masterpiece of its kind, but of a very special kind.

Considered, however, from another point of view he prefers *The Return of the Native* for its more complete representation of life, the life in it being more fluid and more various, the contrasting aspects presented more impartially, and its every incident perfectly realized. Hardy's pessimism is after all 'only a habit of thought, a weariness with life that comes upon us all sometimes, if it does not remain with us always; and that, too, springs from his sympathy with mankind, from the depth and richness of his emotional nature.'

Everard Meynell's *The Life of Francis Thompson*, published in 1913, is still listed in literary compendia as 'the standard life.' One would expect a member of the highly literate Meynell family, which took in Thompson and saved him from destitution, to be eminently suited to undertaking the task of recounting his life and assessing his literary merit, but such is not the case. Manning, in his review of 4 July, 1914, at pages 18 and 19, summarily

rates the book sub-standard:

> Such lovers of Francis Thompson's work as are capable of a discreet and reasoned enthusiasm will close Mr. Everard Meynell's Life of the poet with disappointment and regret. Both as biography and as criticism the book is inadequate. The author scarcely attempts to consider Thompson apart from the relations which existed between them, to see him in diverse lights and from opposed points of view, in the round, as it were, and under all the contradictory aspects of a various personality.

Manning's objections to the *Life* include inadequate and unclear facts; no reasons given for certain sudden relocations by Thompson; his relations with his family not defined for the later period of his life; comparisons with De Quincey and Coleridge used to colour the facts, and every page evidence of a strictly limited and personal point of view.

There are two specific matters raised by Meynell to which Manning takes exception. The first of these is the attempt to parallel incidents in Thompson's life with incidents in the lives of Coleridge and De Quincey. As Manning states, parallels of this kind are invariably superficial and commonplace, and the three men resemble each other only in so far as they were more or less addicted to opium. 'Thompson had neither the qualities of mind which distinguished Coleridge, nor those characteristic of De Quincey; and his experience differs from theirs because the mind which registered it was different.' Preferably, Manning would wish to see Thompson as he was, one's interest not being in the habits, whether of conduct or style, through which he resembles other men, but those peculiar to himself. Opium, after all, was only a symptom of what was a constitutional infirmity of his mind, a means by which the will was relaxed and the imagination freed from the urgent and pressing necessities of his actual life.

There are in Meynell, as Manning puts it, worse errors of taste. His second objection is to Meynell's obsessive claim that opinion denigrating Thompson was influenced by his Roman Catholic persuasion:

> Every contemporary criticism which was not merely adulation of Thompson's work, criticism which pointed out certain obvious defects and affectations of style, is held to have sprung from animus against Thompson's religion. One might think from Mr Meynell's way of looking at the matter that theology was a tenth Muse. As a plain matter of fact, there were then as there still are, a great number of sound and competent critics working for the Press who were of Thompson's religion [Manning being one of them], and the feeling of the age was distinctly favourable to Romanism.

Manning regards Thompson as a true poet because his experience entered into his poetry, and Romanism was a part of his experience; but as a theological system it contributed nothing to his genius. The traces of it in his work are ritualistic rather than dogmatic. He is a religious poet because he expresses in his poetry mystical ideas common to all creeds and all peoples. He is a true poet because he 'tends toward the universal,' and it is that tendency in poetry which makes it in itself a form of religion, by placing humanity in communion with a universal and eternal understanding. His admiration for Thompson as a poet is deep and sincere, and is based upon the poet's simpler and less ambitious work; just as his admiration for Thompson as a prose writer is based upon some articles and reviews of Crashaw, Milton and Pope which, with a gibe one suspects Manning aims at Meynell, he contributed to the Press.

There is a very brief review on 1 November, 1913, at page 721, of a collection of the shorter poems of Frederick Tennyson, the older brother of Alfred. Frederick's eccentricity is summed up by the curiosity that

> one who had been a distinguished cricketer at Eton and captain of the Oppidans, who had taken the Browne medal at Cambridge and retained throughout his life an unswerving devotion to Greek and Roman literature, should have become at Florence, under the tuition of Mrs Browning, a disciple of Swedenborg and a spirit-rapper, and afterwards in Jersey, under Henry Melville, a student of 'an ancient and long-forgotten science of astrology, in which was to be found the true explanation of Masonic Symbolism.'

Manning feels that apart from the eccentricities, Frederick had qualities of mind which, 'with more directive ability and a finer critical sense,' might have amounted to a genius, and while this book contains verse which is full

of melody, there is no single poem which can be considered as an organic whole. They are improvisations and, one suspects from this brief and light-hearted résumé, their form represents the life-style Frederick Tennyson chose to adopt for himself.

A haunting and elusive charm is what constitutes Robert Louis Stevenson's chief claim to be remembered, and it is when he expresses his own nature and allows this influence to interact spontaneously with life, that his work attains its highest level. This is Manning's verdict when reviewing Sidney Colvin's collection of Stevenson's letters, on 7 October, 1911, at pages 549-50. Unfortunately, Manning protests, this free expression of Stevenson's own personality was hampered by the conventions which he deliberately adopted; conventions of style, of method, and even the narrower conventions of the intellect. Because Stevenson treated the art of writing as the mere application of a formula, his work has rather a stereotyped elegance than a real distinction.

Manning hypothesises that Stevenson might have acquired his 'lean, terse style' unconsciously from his reading of Leslie Stephen in *The Cornhill Magazine*. Stephen's style

> is very greatly modified in Stevenson's hands, we admit; it has become delicate, valetudinarian, and fastidious, but it has scarcely gained in range, and whatever excellencies such a style may have, as a medium for criticism and for polemics, it is not a medium through which the fine shades of emotion or the massive features of passion can be conveyed quite adequately.

Against Stevenson, Manning quotes that writer's comments on the speech given by Shakespeare to Enobarbus, describing Antony's meeting with Cleopatra, used by another writer as an example of Shakespeare's colour sense:

> I do not think literature has anything to do with colour, or poets anyway the better of such a sense; and I instantly attacked this passage, since 'purple' was the word that had so pleased the writer of the article, to see if there might not be some reason for it.

From what one has learned of Manning one knows he could not let such an

opinion pass unchallenged. His retort is that 'providing we have a sufficient prejudice to start with, we are pretty certain to find reasons with which to sustain it; and Stevenson found these reasons in alliteration, assonance, and a sequence of consonants, B, P, F. Such a method of criticism, such principles of style, imply a complete divorce of form and substance, and it becomes difficult to write with patience of a theory which would enable us to apply this glowing description to a hen-coop floating in a mill-pond.' Manning continues his disapproval into his own evaluations of 'burnished', 'burnt', and other words being 'not merely a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.' He rounds off his attack by citing the literature of Provençal poetry, Dante and Chaucer as rich in colour. This 'vice' in Stevenson is regretted because of the severe and lofty ideal which he set himself, an ideal to which Manning offers his tribute, however greatly he may deplore its too rigorous application.

In the creation of characters, Manning believes Stevenson lacked those potentialities for good and evil which are necessary, those in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* being almost uniform. His other novels lack keen psychological insight along with 'any curious tracking of the involutions of temperament', with internal conflict practically non-existent, because he would seem to consider that a definite tendency toward good entirely excludes a concurrent tendency toward evil. Furthermore his characters do not act upon one another, but only upon each other's circumstances, having each its own limited space and its own peculiar function in the development of what was always his main object, the plot. While the letters collected by Colvin show Stevenson under varying moods, there is in them the same trace of convention, with only an occasional glimpse of his 'quick and subtle spirit.' Manning defines egoism, paraphrasing a definition of Bergson, as being an interest in ourselves based upon the interest we believe we excite in others. Stevenson's letters show 'altogether lovable' sudden flashes of insight into

his own nature, fostering the wish that such vanity were commoner in the world. But these gleams of humour are balanced, if not outweighed, by others gravely didactic containing his 'cauld harangues on practice and on morals with an elderly primness.'

Manning admires the unfinished *Weir of Hermiston* above the other works because he fancies he sees in it 'some recognition of the essential fluidity of character', but *Treasure Island* is probably the best. The sea has an extraordinary attraction for Stevenson

> as though some inherited impulse urged him toward it, and when he writes of it he seems to be expressing an instinct which is natural to him, he is familiar with it, and with all its moods, familiar with those whose life is upon it; and his romantic and imaginative temperament finds, in the lure of distant horizons, the primitive and elemental conditions, the incalculable caprice of the living element, that space and scope for his creations which the tamed and sophisticated earth could not give to him. When he writes of it his conventions fall away from it, and his genius remains untrammelled.

To complete his praise Manning finds Stevenson's real greatness 'in a hundred fine things said, as it were, by the way', in the essays and especially in *Providence and a Guitar*. An instinct for the sea and a vagabond spirit are the characteristics which contribute to Stevenson's charm.

J.M. Synge's death 'at a moment when he seemed to be entering upon the period of his full maturity, was not only a loss to Ireland', writes Manning in his review of Synge's works on 1 April, 1911, at pages 482-83, just two years after the dramatist's death; and he adds:

> His work had qualities which made it universal. It was impossible not to recognise in it the awakening of a new influence, strongly individual, wonderfully expressive in its rich and glowing idiom, full of vitality and passion. His instincts were admirably sound and sane. He understood that it is not so much the ultimate object of life, as life itself, which bewilders and fascinates us.

Manning finds the simplicity, the stark realism, the poignant intensity of the emotions, to be all extraordinarily Greek in feeling, to fill some of Synge's work with a sense of tragedy almost Aeschylean in its depth and

power. His characters too, drawn from simple and primitive people, crofters and fishermen, whose life is alternatively a conflict with the blind forces of nature and an agreement with them, tending ultimately to raise them to heroic proportions, become types or personifications of humanity's eternal and unprofitable strife with fate. And Manning regards them as great because nothing stands between them and the direct shock of circumstances, as in the plight of Maurya in *Riders to the Sea*. However Synge was not preoccupied exclusively with tragedy. He saw clearly that tragedy and comedy deal with the same material and are merely different modes of representation, the ultimate object of both and the real business of the artist being with life itself. The laughter of his people is as full and spontaneous as their sorrow. Manning quotes from *The Playboy of the Western World* to illustrate Synge's response to their 'humour and vivacity, and with that peculiar attribute of the Irish people - a genius for full-blooded overwhelming abuse':

> Christy Mahon describes the Widow Casey as 'a walking terror from beyond the hills, and she two score and five years, and two hundredweights and five pounds in the weighing scales, with a limping leg on her and a blind eye, and she a woman of noted misbehaviour with the old and young'; and a little later as 'she a hag this day with a tongue on her has the crows and sea-birds scattered, the way they wouldn't cast a shadow on her garden with the dread of her curse.'

The vitality of all this, the spontaneous fertility of invention, the extreme flexibility of expression, Manning finds all admirable. Life itself, which Synge studied with such tender fidelity, in its follies and vices as well as its heroisms, had become a part of his consciousness. Manning asks his readers to compare *The Playboy of the Western World* with G.B. Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island*, to see the difference between life handled finely and imaginatively and what is, after all, nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit. The difference is simply that Shaw is always concerned with those conditions of life which are transient and irrelevant, while Synge is always concerned with the passions and emotions which are eternal and universal.

Manning believes that it is because Synge was chiefly an artist in life, a poet in the sense of being a creator, that his tragedies are preferred to his comedies, and it is in his return to tragedy in his last play *Deirdre of the Sorrows* that he revealed his powers more completely than in any other:

> He is always a poet in his handling of life, but here he is more of a poet than ever: the fatalism and the emotion suffuse and transfigure the reality. The Media of Euripides knows whither fate is leading her, but consciousness of it cannot shake her resolve. It is the same with Deirdre. She sees that her love for Naisi will bring death upon him and his brothers and herself, but the imperious necessity of love overpowers her. Her speeches have an extraordinary beauty of phrase, full of haunting music, as she speaks of the fatality that follows after all joy and beauty given to man.

Greek, too, in some aspects, Manning recognises, is Deirdre's lament over the grave of Naisi and his brothers:

> It's you three will not see age or death coming - you that were my company when the fires on the hill-tops were put out, and the stars were our friends only. I'll turn my thoughts back from this night that's pitiful for the lack of pity, to the time it was your rods and cloaks made a little tent for me where there'd be a birch tree making shelter, and a dry stone; though, from this day, my own fingers will be making a tent for me, spreading out my hairs and they knotted with the rain.

He admits having scarcely spoken about the literary quality of Synge's work, but suggests there is no need, for as with all fine art there is a perfect adaptation of the means to the end. Synge's matter and style are inseparable. One of the most delightful characteristics of his work is his power of showing, without any apparent break in the dialogue, glimpses of landscape, flights of birds, sheep pasturing, the pools of the rivers, and the cool ferns. These glimpses illuminate all of Synge's work, and are clearest in *Deirdre* 'though there we should do wrong to separate them from the bewildering beauty of the play itself, a beauty that seems borrowed of woods and waters with the wind stirring them, a thing scarcely to be spoken about, but to be felt inwardly, and treasured up in the heart.'

The remaining seven reviews are less significant. The first of them, 9 November, 1912, at pages 752-53, covering a selection of Old English popular romances or histories, is reviewed under Manning's title 'Tales of Autolycus', referring to Shakespeare's memorable comic rogue in *The Winter's Tale*, deriving from mythology's son of Hermes celebrated for his craft as a thief. Printed versions of these tales postdate 1600, but the tales themselves were current much earlier, Manning suggesting that they originated from the balladmongers' habit of linking together a number of ballads by short narrative or explanatory passages of prose, in order to form a single and continuous history. 'Such tales Autolycus carried in his pack as he journeyed from fair to fair, singing and selling his "ballets" from the back of a country cart, at wakes, wassails, and sheep-shearings, in those rare fits of honesty which took him at times.'

They deal with the development of action rather than with the development of character. There is a rapid succession of incidents which have little relation to each other and the characters, though often presented with a vivid realism as though drawn from life, are rather superficial. It is their comic aspect which is most readily portrayed, or some physical feature. Manning finds them entertaining, but would prefer the archaic notions and ideas to have been expressed in archaic words, as the quaint beliefs current in those days expressed in modern English tend to affect him as an anachronism.

There follows a review, on 13 July, 1912, pp.59-60, of two travel books, being studies of the details and conditions of touring, one of the fourteenth century and the other of the seventeenth. The object of Sidney Heath, author of the former, is 'to serve and entertain the general reader who is interested in the religious pilgrimages of olden days, of which so many memorials remain throughout the country.' Manning corrects an oversight

by pointing out there is a difference between monastic property and church property, and that the 'method of bestowal used by Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell was, in all essentials, that recommended by Wicliffe and Langland in the fourteenth century.' Heath also reproduces from Walter Skeat's edition of Langland's *Piers Plowman*, Skeat's own quotation from earlier times

> 'with reference to the general character of these pilgrimages the following words: "I know well that when divers men and women will goe thus, after their owne wils and finding out, on pilgrimage, they will ordain with them before, to have with them both men and women, that can well sing wanton songs."'

The other book, on seventeenth century travel, is graded by Manning as careful and scholarly, admirably conceived as a whole, and agreeable. He agrees with the author's, E.S. Bates's, comparison of travel then with travel in his day; travel then, while thought to be more leisurely, was actually conducted at the greatest pace possible, leaving no time and energy free for enjoying and studying places on the road:

> '[W]here they stopped at the night they left at dawn; and overnight they had been too tired to explore amid the filth, the dangers, the darkness, the inextricable confusion, of a [...] town or hamlet.'

Manning believes this passage serves to show, at the same time, both the author's good sense and his bad punctuation.

W.P. Ker, another grand old academic, is responsible through his 'most charming and interesting' collection of the essays of John Andrew Doyle, for the next review of 1 June, 1912, at pages 874-75. Manning rates the book highly, rather for the character, the urbanity, the ease of manner, and the quiet humour of Doyle, than for the matter of his writing. He applauds most those essays which draw upon Doyle's specialised knowledge of American history. In the essay entitled 'Freeman, Froude and Seeley' he finds 'only the competence of a well-informed man to deal with a subject in which he is interested for the moment.' The widely diverging talents of those three historians seem to escape Doyle with, in particular, Doyle's friendship with

Freeman tempering his judgment of that person's assaults on Froude. As a result Manning doubts 'the judicial and appreciative qualities of Doyle's mind', praised in William Anson's Introduction. Other essays deal with Doyle's 'curious and comprehensive knowledge of the turf and stud-book.' Manning quotes from Doyle's study of complicated breeding through blood lines in apparently famous stallions and dams, which supports 'an excellent hypothesis if we accept the theory, held by many scientists, that the sire's characteristic qualities are generally inherited by the daughters and transmitted through them.' As a final caprice in this whimsical collection and review, Manning allows himself to be drawn into taking issue with the sporting Doyle's opinion of Shakespeare's preference in field sports.

Grouped next are three reviews of collected letters, firstly of William Allingham, 23 November, 1912, pp.861-62; then of Lionel Johnson, 10 January, 1920, pp.51-52; and thirdly of Lafcadio Hearn, 2 September, 1911, pp.346-47. William Allingham (1824-89) was the friend of Coventry Patmore, Thomas Carlyle, D.G. Rossetti and Alfred Tennyson. Among others who corresponded with him were Leigh-Hunt, Browning, Thackeray, Burne-Jones, Monckton Milnes, Francis Galton and William Morris; and it is the letters from these notables, and others to him, which constitute the bulk of the book. Consequently very little of Allingham is revealed from the collection, its interest being successive and not continuous, with the figure of Allingham himself rather obscured by this succession which, Manning regrets, obscures the affection which Allingham inspired in those who wrote to him.

The letters of Lionel Johnson, edited and submitted for publication anonymously, arouse a deeper regret in Manning. He finds them hurtful. This may result partly from his remembering that Arthur Galton was Johnson's mentor; but there is inferred regret that the letters, by a schoolboy, have been mulled over and published, after years of reflection, in an attack upon

Johnson's parents, who objected to their son's involvement with religious cranks. The matter assumes the proportions of the spiteful revival of a minor scandal long put to rest. Johnson himself, shows through his letters the

> intellectual dishonesty which characterized [him] through life, and acted as a solvent for all moral obligations that might seem irksome or tedious to him. The most charitable view to take is that he was an impressionable boy acting under the incitement of older and stronger minds; and this opinion, while it does not clear his friends, explains why, for all their pride in his friendship, they prefer to remain anonymous.

Manning finds little in the letters to interest him, although they show an extraordinary command of language. He defines Johnson as curiously medieval, with a fondness for ritual, silence and candle-light. He created about himself a kind of ideal and Gothic twilight, in which his mind could breed its own chimeras. Even in literature his judgment was not sure; it is his real love for it, absorbing him completely, rather than any critical excellence, which Manning respects in him.

Lafcadio Hearn attracts some interest as a person who lived in Japan and did his best to adopt that country's life-style at a time when the Japanese discouraged European inquiry. Thus the novelty of his situation gave to his letters when published, a topicality which has faded. Even so, to Manning, a man of their time,

> the charm and delicacy which characterize nearly all Hearn's books on Japan are practically absent from these letters; and he had little to replace these qualities, little of the wit, intimacy, and humour which give a letter its value for us, put us on good terms with the writer, and make us feel for all the printed page as though it had come to us that moment through the post.

Instead the letters are mainly fragments of literary criticism which are of no great interest, and of philosophic discussions which do not show an unusual acuteness of intellect. Also while they reveal the basis from which Hearn built up his finished studies and the literary influences which helped to form his style, they have an aloof and slightly self-conscious manner

'which is not present in fine letters.' On the other hand they do give slight descriptive sketches of Japanese life, manners and scenery. The collection's editor and Hearn's biographer, Elizabeth Bisland, 'takes an opposite view, and tells us that these letters are "greater as a piece of self-revealment than Rousseau's *Confessions* or Amiel's *Journal*," but we can forgive much to the enthusiasm of a friend.'

A companion book entitled *Lafcadio Hearn in Japan*, written by a Japanese, is reviewed more favourably. The writer's English, with its occasional lapses into a foreign idiom, Manning finds 'altogether charming', and certainly to be preferred to that of the previous book's editor, who 'speaks of Poe's "plangent phrases and canorous orismology."' The book also shows that Hearn's romantic vision of Japan was largely of his own manufacture, and that he was more in touch with the people through the qualities of his heart than of his head. His nature was emotional rather than intellectual, and he experienced what most people may feel at some time, the desire to escape from the too urgent and intrusive reality into the ideal world either of the past or of the future. It was an escape into an ideal but not into an intangible world which he sought to achieve; and Manning thinks 'he loved Buddhism, not for its promise of a final extinction, but for all those innumerable existences which it draws like a veil over the face of the infinite.' Manning also finds something pathetic in the fact that Hearn, with all his love and admiration for the Japanese, should have remained an alien to them. He seemed as strange to them as they seemed to him, and they regarded him with the same minute curiosity.

The final review in this examination from *The Spectator* was published on 15 March, 1913, at pages 453-54, about 'a romantic fantasy, a caprice', *The Crock of Gold* by the Irish poet, story-writer and later a broadcaster, James Stephens. Even a caprice, for Manning, for all its charm and humour

must have some continuity of development; and Stephens's book is unsatisfactory because it lacks this continuity while representing neither any development of character in action nor any mechanical succession of varied incidents. By contrast, Manning observes the myth-makers' tales collected in Lady Gregory's contemporary publication *Gods and Fighting Men*, has the very excess of invention, the rapidity with which one passes from wonder to wonder, and above all the splendid objectivity, to prevent the mind from questioning any detail. Manning accepts the gods of legend or the monsters of fable and myth, not because they differ from mortals in their comparative freedom from material restrictions, but because they resemble mortals through their character, and are presented as simply a different race. He also favours the *Fables* of La Fontaine portraying the same types as the *Characters* of Theophrastus, only they are disguised in animal form, which Manning believes gives them a more subtle and persuasive irony. It is the same with the tales of Hans Christian Andersen or of Perrault; there is character and action included in a logical sequence of development. And because one recognises, from one's own experience, the truth with which certain features of character are presented, one is led imperceptibly to credit also the extraordinary and fantastic elements.

Manning finds that Stephens does not attempt to base his romance upon realism. His story and the people in it exist simply as a medium for the expression of his own ideas. The archaic format Stephens adopts is not a proper vehicle for the expression of current opinions, and also, he finds it curiously näive that a book which ought to represent what is actual and objective should be used as a medium of thought, and that praise of an irrational life governed only by instinct should express itself almost entirely in argument. Manning recognises that his criticism is directed mainly against the form of the book, based upon the fact that the chief interest is not found in either the action or in the characters, but in the

play of ideas; he adds that the ideas themselves are current and not strikingly original. But against this the book has many phrases and some passages of remarkable beauty, which lead him to think that the qualities of Stephens's mind are those of an essayist or a lyrical poet rather than a storyteller.

The above summaries cover the totality of Manning's reviews for *The Spectator*. One further comment by him on his reviewing, representative of his attitude to the process, is quoted from a letter to Fairfax:

> I have just got off an article on Stevenson, which has been sitting like a nightmare upon me for two months. I cannot honestly praise his work, and yet there is something in the man's fortitude, and personal charm, which appeals strongly to me. As it is, I have sent in a hostile, and slightly contemptuous review of the *Letters*, which I am half-inclined to hope Strachey will not print, tho' if I were asked for my opinion again, I could not conscientiously say other than I have said. It is absurd in me to attach so much importance to a review, which will probably not have the smallest influence; but somehow or other I always feel a reluctance to criticise such things harshly. I have a sort of respect for human endeavour, human vanity, and human failure even, as being after all common to the whole of mankind. Now I am mid-way through a review of a new translation of Dante, and after that I have to do an anthology of French verse, a small volume of Gray's criticisms, the new edition of Shelley, a volume of selections from De Quincey, thirty plays selected from the Elizabethans: (Lyly to Shirley) and two books about Thomas Love Peacock. Be charitable to my weakness as a correspondent.[15]

That statement restates his dislike for reviewing while at the same time admitting his obligation to the task, including with it loyalty to others whose commitment to writing, he knows from experience, incurs special demands. The range and style of his reviews is impressive, and their contribution toward his own development is valuable through the discipline of converting his theoretical knowledge into practical criticism.

The form Manning adopts is Arnoldian in its comparative approach and critical empiricism. His polyglot erudition originates from the enormous

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[15] Fairfax papers, No.93, letter dated 11 November, 1911, continued on 23 November, 1911.

breadth of his reading resulting from Arthur Galton's coaching, his touchstones therein including Chaucer, Dante, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Milton, Gray, Morris and Hardy, along with his Francophilia and a continuing respect for Arnold. They follow after his classicism which lacks the traditional stress on formalism, probably because he did not study classical literature through the established education system. In addition he embraces a cosmopolitanism deriving from his appreciation of European culture.

Along with occasional flashes of annoyance and impatience, he attacks his peers, often wittily and sometimes caustically, but always justifiably. Practically always he is conscious of a duty to inform his readers despite, as he surmises, their doubtful appreciation. Where he feels chastisement is due, he is never slow to question the opinions of the established and rising scholars and authors of his day, and his own opinions frequently anticipate later twentieth century changes in literary taste although his critical expression remains firmly of its own time in its formality. Overall he is an entertaining and instructive critic, but most importantly here, his reviews espouse the standards he aspires to, and often achieves in his own writing. Most obviously the reviews on Petrarch, Blake and Morris discuss characteristics later found in his war poety and in *The Middle Parts of Fortune*. He is an outstanding prosodist, knowledgeable beyond the level apparent in the above examples, précised from his discourses. His application of this skill probably prompted the critical comment, quoted in the Introduction here, that his early poetry contains 'a certain veil of wilful cleverness to which he occasionally resorts.' While Manning agrees with Morris that Swinburne's poetry draws from literature, much of Manning's early poetry draws from soulful inner voices and phantoms. The 'awakening of a new influence' he experiences, partly through Synge, culminates in the revitalised purpose in his war poetry and his war novel.

ii. 1924–1927: Articles in *The Criterion*

The Criterion was published during the years 1922 to 1939 after being launched by T.S. Eliot as a quarterly (for a while monthly) periodical. During its lifetime the journal remained influential and retained an immense literary prestige through the quality of Eliot's editorship and its brilliant array of contributors. In the case of Frederic Manning's contributions, care should be taken in attribution because the work of another writer, Fanny Marlow (a pseudonym of Vivienne Eliot),[16] is published above the initials F.M., whereas Manning's work appears above his full name. The periodical's 'Author Index' at page 464 includes under 'Manning, Frederic' two entries, 'Letters of the Moment, I.II, 220-222; II.II, 360-364' which are printed above the initials F.M. but are not Manning's work. Similarly the 'Index' entries 'Necesse est perstare [Poem]. III, 364,' and the book reviews 'Catullus. *Complete Poems*. Ed. and Trans. by F.A. Wright. IV, 603'; 'Garnet, D. *A Man in the Zoo*. II, 483'; and 'Murry, J.M. *The Voyage*. II, 483' are all Marlow's writing.

The 1920s, during which Manning wrote for *The Criterion*, were mostly miserable years for him. His health steadily deteriorated, he lost his home-fire comforts after Galton's death, he procrastinated over his commitment to writing a biography with which he did not empathise, and he became increasingly isolated. These circumstances influenced him in writing only a few articles, published sporadically.

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[16] C.K. Stead, *Pound, Yeats, Eliot and the Modernist Movement*, (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp.200-01.

Manning commenced with reviews of books by Arnold Toynbee and T.D. Denniston (Vol.III, No.9, October 1924, pp.134-37), Albert Houtin, S.L. Couchond and Th. Zielinski (Vol.II, No.8, July 1924, pp.460-67; Vol.III, No.10, January 1925, pp.320-21; Vol.IV, No.3, June 1926, pp.590-93) and Valéry Larbaud (Vol.VI, No.5, November 1927, pp.448-55).

Toynbee's and Denniston's books form parts of series and therefore, Manning accepts, the editors cannot be held responsible for the plans imposed upon them. Each volume comprises a short introduction preceding a collection of selected passages translated from various Greek authors. Manning tempers his observation that such books must be profitable otherwise they would not be published, by adding that their value is less obvious because translation deforms thought and selection mutilates it. Also any passage torn from its context, however splendid its language, loses in beauty, character and strength. Therefore, bearing in mind the editors' constraints, he is lenient with Denniston in his *Greek Literary Criticism* for showing Socrates arguing in one instance that

> the same persons are not successful even in the two forms of imitation that seem very closely allied, in writing tragedy and comedy[;]

while arguing in another context

> to acknowledge that the genious of comedy was the same as that of tragedy, and that the true artist in tragedy was an artist in comedy also.

Although, to Manning, the two statements 'are not mutually exclusive, they are difficult to reconcile until we have related them again to the dramatic action and irony of Plato's method.' He approves of the translations Denniston has used and he would like to think 'that the discreet malice, which prompted him to open his selections with a parody and to close them with a satire, expresses the spirit in which he approached his business.'

The Toynbee books are *Greek Historical Thought* and *Greek Civilisation*

and Character. Manning finds in them neither Denniston's diffidence nor his wit, but finds instead ingenuousness. Toynbee claims that 'we cannot attempt to appreciate Plutarch so long as we insist upon reading him in Langhorne's translation, or to reproduce him to our own satisfaction, so long as we interlard our modern translation with Elizabethan tags until we have compounded a hotchpotch of "translationese" unlike any living piece of literature of our own age or any other.' To this Manning retorts, 'the "parallel chronology" on which this passage is based considers the life of Plutarch as equivalent to the period between 1846 and 1925 in our own era. Such fanciful devices may amuse an idle mind, but are entirely valueless in the serious study of history.' For, so far as Toynbee's argument is true, it is a truism and every translation is necessarily characteristic of the age producing it. The obvious fact that one looks at Greek literature from one's own point of view does not make Herodotus a contemporary. He accuses Toynbee of fastening onto a generalisation, 'Hellas', and injecting into it his own value and his own truth, or what he accepts as their equivalents. To Toynbee's rhetorical question, 'are any products of Hellenic literature immature or primitive or naïve or archaic when regarded as they really are, without the qualifying and distorting consciousness that they were brought into existence so many hundreds of years ago?', Manning answers, 'Yes: they are.' He cites, with examples, the incidence of 'a hundred *naïvetés* in Herodotus alone', and retaliates against Toynbee's 'interlarding' by citing Sir James Frazer for presenting 'what Professor Toynbee would call, perhaps, the *mediaevalism* of the Greek mind.' Manning's final reproach is a counter-claim to Toynbee's that Herodotus' attitude to 'historical writing lay through politics and not through theology.' Manning's response is that in the simple and primitive Greek city-state religion and politics were not separate, or clearly distinguished from each other: the crime of impiety, with which Socrates and many others were charged, was as much a crime against the state as against the gods. The difference is in the absence then of a

religious authority distinct and separate from the state. 'But', he concludes with a rhetorical question for Toynbee, 'is there not a theological touch in the accusation brought against Peisistratus of falsifying Homer in support of a territorial claim?'

Manning's reviews of his friend Albert Houtin's publications begin with *Le Père Hyacinthe*, Houtin's 'Life' of Charles Loyson (1827-1912), who throughout his life boldly denounced abuses in the Church and the dogma of infallibility. For these reasons Houtin and Arthur Galton greatly admired Loyson and found through him common ground for their fellowship. In this book Houtin mainly directs attention to Loyson's philosophical questioning of the value of faith in the modern world. The account reveals to Manning 'the successive states of consciousness, the spiritual reactions to fact, at the point, the moment, of impact; before the reason has assimilated them; and in all their flow, their tenuity, their incandescence.' He adds that Houtin seldom intervenes between the reader and his subject, and then always with a severe reticence to interpose his own personal opinions. Thus the 'Life' he records is as close to the actual experience as possible.

Consistently Manning refers to Newman in his theological writing for *The Criterion*. In this instance he quotes from Newman:

> It is the very function of a Christian to be moving against the world, and to be protesting against the majority of voices.

He thinks that Newman, in uttering those words, realised as fully perhaps as Loyson (Père Hyacinthe), the tragedy of faith. Manning postulates that, beginning as a religious impulse faith is, at least initially, spontaneous, irreflective, and naïve. But when once confronting reality, it meets with the resistance of opposite impulses, of conflicting facts, and is changed into a conscious, reflective, and reasoning effort. Ultimately argument exhausts itself, is consumed by its own effort, and the soul rejecting the resistance of fact, rests upon faith for affirmation of an irrational

intuition of God. Being naturally variable and inconstant, this is a faith from which one inevitably lapses, and to which one inevitably returns, in so doing to constitute for Manning the tragedy of faith. Looking for examples, he compares the qualities of Newman and Renan: two minds radically opposed but both pessimistic. Faith, however attenuated, existed in the intellectual life of Renan, as did doubt in the spiritual life of Newman, leaving them with the impotence of reason to solve a question so vital to them both, and the decision, in each case equally, arbitrary and irrational.

In sharp contrast Père Hyacinthe, feeling an 'increasing hatred for ultramontanism, protestantism and democracy', eventually broke from the Church and, Manning concludes:

> seems to have shaken off the last remnants of his Catholicism: resting on a living and personal faith in a living and personal God, or on that *affirmation du coeur* of which Renan had written. He represents for us, with his naïveté and vision, the triumph of faith over religion, of a personality over an age. For he possessed the quality of holiness, as others possess courage or beauty, clothed in it, as in a personal charisma. His simplicity disarms irony. He realised, not with Newman's originating mind, but with his own exquisite sensibility, that "it is the very function of the Christian to be moving against the world, and to be protesting against the majority of voices."

Here surfaces in Manning another of his touchstones comparatively late in his writing, although the inspiration for it originated much earlier, in his development under Galton and in conversation with Houtin. Père Hyacinthe, as explained to him by Houtin, epitomises the faith which Manning gave his Brunhild, which progresses through the settings in *Scenes and Portraits* and, after identifying in the soldiers of the Great War, carried forward into his soldiers in *The Middle Parts of Fortune* to explain their determination against terrible odds:

> The simplicity of their outlook on life gave them a certain dignity, because it was free from irrelevances.[17]

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17 Frederic Manning, *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, pp.204-05, in which this quotation is central.

Respectively reviews of Houtin's biography of Marcel Hébert and his autobiography, *Un Prêtre Symboliste: Marcel Hébert* and *Une Vie de Prêtre: Mon Expérience*, continue Manning's reflections on faith. In Manning's reading of both books he sees Houtin's efforts to present ecclesiasics'

> thoughts in their own words from their own letters, and, which are even more instructive, their after-thoughts, their inconsistencies, their too subtle accommodations, the instability of their minds under pressure of opposed and incompatible forces, the last refinements of a sophistry exhausting itself in the attempt to maintain an ambiguous and equivocal position.

However Manning believes that the most ambiguous and equivocal utterances may be the best proofs of sincerity. He instances from *Un Prêtre Symboliste* the case that it was not on articles of creed that friends and theologians differed, they accepted 'all', but differed 'on the word *credo*, on the sense of the word "true" as applied to dogma: it is the whole value of revelation which is at stake.' Manning writes, 'Houtin himself, is dangerously objectivist.' Where Hébert and others were concerned with the philosophical question of value, or the philosophical question of faith, Houtin is concerned purely with the historical question of fact; 'but the scientific probity of M. Houtin's intelligence, the serenity of his historical conscience could not mitigate sufficiently the trouble which this crisis in his faith occasioned in him.' Further, the emotional crisis was insufficient to obscure the question of fact; it was sufficient however to reveal to Houtin the psychological problem of modernism[18]: the reaction of the individual mind to the historical criticism before it, believing the mind is bound to attempt some means of escape from the incredible conclusions, which it has been forced to consider; and in the case of each individual modernist, his 'modernism' is no more than the testing of these means of escape whatever sophistries they may involve. This is a transitional stage which the modernist is bound to cross. In the example of Newman as a questioning

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[18] 'Modernism' used here by Manning refers to a largely clerical movement among French Catholics.

Anglican, his was a more or less deliberate attempt to inject his own 'real' values into the merely 'national' forms of dogma. Such a transitional stage is inevitable, Manning believes, whatever may be the issue of the conflict.

> Manning wants to know
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> how far any external sanction or command is effective in an attempt to alter that imaginative construction of belief in the individual mind which results from a long and intricate psychological process; faith in the fullest sense of the word, being not merely an object present to the consciousness, but a structural development of the consciousness itself.

He finds an inconclusive explanation in Newman's observation of, 'the impossibility of unclothing oneself of all the prepossessions and habits of mind and character, which constitute the greater part of personality, at the command of another.' Manning next questions Newman's relationship to modernism which Manning sees effecting in him a reconciliation of faith and reason in the individual consciousness, while his whole method implied the freedom of consciousness, and accepted it as the ultimate criterion of faith. Newman subsequently declared, concerning Infallibility, that 'Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ.' That the Church should have tolerated the teaching of Newman was, naturally enough, Manning thinks, 'an encouragement to such modernists as attempted [compromises].[...] By following the logical consequences of Newman's thought, we may arrive at a position entirely opposed to his own; but we do not carry him with us.' Manning concludes that it is idle to set up the individual consciousness as the sole criterion of truth, and then impose on it an external authority which sets a limit on its action, or pithily, 'faith is not a matter of discipline.'

Manning very briefly reviews a collection of books by Houtin, S.L. Couchond, Alain, and Th. Zielinski, all based on hermeneutics. He disagrees with Couchond's conclusion that 'the existence of Jesus can no longer be accepted as an historical fact', and with his sophistic dismissal of the evidence of St. Paul. Equally he distrusts the sentimentality of Alain.

Both books are 'too subjective, unless of course one is interested in the bias of a writer's mind, which is often the only interesting quality it possesses.' Houtin, on the other hand, 'is an historian, his methods are always careful, precise, scrupulous, and if under his hands the facts lose something of their colour, their nature, and their vitality, we prefer to see them under that hard, dry light in which he exhibits them, than when coloured and even perverted by a more imaginative or a more rhetorical treatment.' Manning observes in Zielinski too 'a really fine critical insight' so that he finds nothing more to say in review, but adds his own hermeneutical conclusion:

> The historical fact for us is simply the fact that Jesus existed. It is idle even to talk of tradition or of development. There has been a succession of Christianities all differing: one characteristic form has been superimposed upon another, until their individual outlines have become blurred and indistinct, until at last the character has been deformed beyond recognition, and become a mere type without any characteristics at all. If we ask ourselves what was the original and characteristic feature of the teaching of Jesus, we are immediately at a loss. Remove the film deposited by the Church, by the Fathers, by the Evangelists, by Saint Paul, and when we are once in the presence of Jewish Messianism we realise immediately that we have passed behind the figure of Jesus already, and are moving among the shadows of his precursors. The object of our search has eluded us. There are the prophets on the one hand, and the pagan mysteries on the other. One might as well turn at once to Sir James Frazer's *Belief in Immortality*, and the fascinating pages of the *Golden Bough*. And yet there is historical evidence of the existence of Jesus, too strong for us to put aside.

This describes an anomaly which defies explanation. Between his opening statement and his final return to it, Manning emphasises the futility of looking for historical proof of anything about Jesus beyond the fact that he did live, and implies that because Jesus did live, those who are motivated to believe in his teaching in the form they favour, must rely on faith to accept that teaching.

Manning also reviews *Carmen, and some other short stories by Prosper Mérimée*, with its introduction by Valéry Larbaud. 'The persistence in France', writes Manning

> of what is called the classical tradition, where it has absorbed and assimilated in turn every rival influence, which from time to time has confronted it, very probably results from the recognition, almost instinctive in so logical a race, of language as addressing itself primarily to the intellect and to the senses only through the medium of the intellect; and with his irony, his amused curiosity, his imperturbable rationalism, his erudition, his objective vision and clarity of statement, Mérimée, though immersed in the flood of the Romantic movement, was, as indeed he seemed to many of his contemporaries, unshaken in his allegiance to tradition.

He adds that classic and romantic are commonly used as though their meaning were self-evident and needed no further definition; but if the distinction implied in their use has any reality at all it must be a distinction as to form. Manning proceeds to explain the classical development of tragedy and lyrism, with criticisms by Arnold, Pater and Mackail; it being 'the dramatic nature of Mérimée's work which distinguishes him from the romantics of his time.' Manning believes that into Mérimée's simple, ironic and admirably composed plan, which is classical in the sense that action and characters alike are typical, he has injected his own subjective experience of his age, vicariously, but objectifying it in a kind of dramatic action. Mérimée's reserve is simply that of the well-bred man towards a world which he knows, for which he has both pity and contempt. He neither asked for sympathy nor trusted it. He does not bore his readers with his life story, or try to conceal incompetency by venting the excellence of his motives and intentions, however deceived he had been by his friends, or how misunderstood by the world. But he is not a lunatic automaton afflicted with an occasional nervous crisis, whose life is clouded by intangible dreams and ineffective desires. Nor is he that pathetic spectacle, an artist in need of an interpreter. He seems to Manning to be an enigma in the modern world only because he was perfectly sane.

Manning's 'A French Criticism of Newman' appeared in Vol.IV, No.1, January 1926, pp.19-31, in reply to Ramon Fernandez' article 'The Experience of Newman', published in the periodical in October 1924. In turn, Fernandez

responded to Manning's reply in the June, 1926 issue, his response being translated from the French by F.S. Flint for *The Criterion*. Their spirited exchange arose from their conflicting interpretations of John Henry Newman's philosophy, a confrontation which must have gladdened the editorial heart of the Anglo-Catholic Eliot. The debate originates with Manning taking exception to Fernandez' claim that 'it may be of great interest to a Catholic to bend Newman's thought in the direction of mysticism, and on the whole he has a perfect right to do so.' From the ensuing discussion on whether Newman's belief is relative to religious or mystic experience, a more general debate evolves between them on the origins of Newman's formative ideas. Manning displays a comfortable familiarity with Christian philosophy, as one would expect after the analysis of his earlier works here, and in his later writing. Although Fernandez has the last word he does not emerge as a clear winner.

Another clash of opinions arises from the formidable R.G. Collingwood's review of *Epicurus's Morals*[19] in Vol. VI, No.4, October 1927, pp. 369-72, and Manning's reply in a 'Letter to the Editor', Vol. VII. No.1, January 1928, pp.61-62. Collingwood introduces his critique provocatively:

> We recognize, readily enough, that the truth concerning nebulae and bacteria is the daughter of time, and reveals itself, if at all, only after a long course of investigation that has led into strange mazes of misconception; and it is but a step beyond this to the recognition that our own ideas concerning these things may seem to our children as false as our fathers' seem to us. But it is less easy to realize that, without centuries of skilled and scientific study, the text of an ancient writer is just as unintelligible, just as certain to be misunderstood, as are the works of nature.

In denigrating Charleton's work Collingwood declares that 'the cautious reader will not imagine that Epicurus and Doctor Charleton's Epicurus are the same person.' He does so on the basis that the extant fragments of Epicurus,

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[19] Walter Charleton (Trans. 1656), *Epicurus's Morals: Collected and faithfully Englished.* With an Introductory Essay by Frederic Manning. (London: Peter Davies, 1926).

all told amount to seventy pages of text, of which some twenty-five are more or less concerned with moral questions. Out of these 'scraps' he notes that Charleton has put together a hundred and twenty pages of connected prose, of systematic Epicurean ethics. 'Where,' he asks, 'does it all come from?' He acknowledges that Manning, in his Introduction 'warns us that there is much extraneous matter; and no doubt he only refrains for fear of insulting our intelligence from adding that this extraneous matter is almost wholly un-Epicurean in origin and character, and consists very largely of the translator's own padding.' He also accuses Charleton of presenting Epicurus to his readers as 'a person to be judged and admired by the standards of the seventeenth century', because that century 'tried to free an ancient writer like Epicurus from his setting in history, in order to erect him into an eternal idea outside time, and therefore, it was fancied, closer to the present.' Manning, in his short sharp reply, infers that Collingwood quibbles.

Firstly, of the 'extraneous matter' in contention, Manning is unaware that 'there is any occasion for the timidity imputed to me.' He quotes from his introduction to Charleton's work:

> 'It is not of course simply a translation of the existing fragments of Epicurus. [Charleton] describes it as "collected out of his own Greek Text, in Diogenes Laertius, and partly out of the Rhapsodies of Marcus Antoninus, Plutarch, Cicero, and Seneca"; that is to say, it is another "fabric", which he has augmented, interpreted, and arranged in his own way.' [...] I do not think these words of mine warrant Mr Collingwood in making me an accomplice to his opinions.

Next he attacks Collingwood's accusation of Charleton clothing Epicurus in seventeenth century garb:

> The statement that the seventeenth century, which had Casaubon at the beginning of it and Bentley at the end, 'tried to free an ancient writer like Epicurus [...] closer to the present' in so far as it implies a deliberate method; if one may use such terms of a manifest absurdity, is a purely gratuitous assumption, and if we are to cultivate an historical sense, and a proper spirit of detachment, the first prepossession of which we should rid our minds is that naive assumption of our own superiority to the past, of which we are too often only the foolish heirs.

As Manning has shown in his reviewing for *The Spectator*, he is a fearless adversary when roused. Collingwood showed, in turn, judicious restraint by not engaging in further public correspondence on the matter.

Two works by J.G. Frazer, *The Worship of Nature* and *The Gorgon's Head*, provide the basis for an article headed 'A Note On Sir James Frazer' in Vol. VI, No.3, of September 1927, at pages 197 to 205. Manning discusses therein the merging of evolution into history by considering Frazer's theory that religion originates in magic, recognising three stages, 'first, a stage in which magic existed without religion; second, in which religion having arisen, co-operated, and was to some extent confused with magic; and third, a stage in which the radical difference of principle between the two having been recognised, their relation was one of open hostility.' Manning also examines a correlation in name derivations and therefore divinity, between the Greek, Roman and Hindu deities Zeus, Jupiter and Dyaus, with 'the character of Zeus [being] the whole of the path traversed by him in the course of his development from a sky-god into a supreme god'; and later demonstrates that history, within limits

> subserves the purpose of anthropology, by showing how constant and enduring are certain customs, beliefs and institutions, among the flux of events, as though they alone provided the natural and necessary forms through which the instincts of man's nature can find their full expressions.

In summarising Manning's journalism with *The Criterion*, commensurate with his personal problems already mentioned as responsible for his small output is also, very probably, Eliot's selectivity as editor in allocating material to him. This is apparent from the limited subject matter provided, orientated toward Manning's interests in Christian dogma, his friendship with Houtin, his Francophilia, all interrelated, and his classical scholarship. Even so, he maintains the journalistic standards he set himself earlier with *The Spectator*. The remainder of Manning's minor prose works consist of

freelance articles for several other literary journals.

iii. Miscellaneous

'Greek Genius and Greek Democracy', *The Edinburgh Review*, Vol.217, No.444, pages 334-51, April 1913. This is a highly compressed account of classical Greek society and literature in the reviews of four books by R.W. Livingstone, Gilbert Murray (2), and A.E. Zimmern. Manning believes that Livingstone's object, to write not a history of the Greeks, or a history of the Greek genius, but an account of 'its significance on us', along with Murray's and Zimmern's similar approach, introduces personal prejudices which distort facts. Manning writes:

> The tendency in all alike is to consider genius not as an isolated and individual quality, but simply as a national characteristic, and to contrast the reality of modern life in its actual incoherence and complexity with the vision of that Greek world, the beauty of which, freed from all contact with reality, purified its baser and superfluous material, and moving without restriction in an atmosphere that is purely ideal, seems to strike immediately upon our senses with the freshness of a wind. We see it complete and perfect because freed from the action of the forces which deposited it, and we are liable to forget that we are dealing, not with an actual experience, but only with the traces of that experience.

Manning finds some of Murray's material 'more pliant', but believes his theological ideas are misapplied to the natural processes of society. Manning's approach to the Greek (mainly Athenian) history contrasts with these writers by being sternly realistic, and as a result often contradicts their findings. This is reminiscent of his disciplined use of history when placing Brunhild and Helgi in the context of their times, but here with more documentation to draw from. As far as he can go in making his case, he prefers to let that documentation speak for itself.

Seldom in his reviewing can he resist the opportunity to jibe at his reviewees. On this occasion, to Livingstone's example of the political and religious freedom then enjoyed in Greek life, contrasting the Athenian public's compliant attitude towards Aristophanes' censure of the Peloponnesian war, against that of the British public's reaction to Lloyd George's disapproval of the South African war, Manning observes dryly:

> Some of us, though opinions may differ on an unimportant point, will doubt whether the cases of a comedian and of a politician are parallel, so we will confine our attention to the treatment which Aristophanes received.

He demolishes most of the propositions advanced in these books through his clearer understanding of - the significance contained in certain historical events, the interaction between religion and politics; the concept that progress means maintaining the proportion between the utilisation of material resources and the numbers enjoying them; liberty not being the achievement of democratic action concentrated in a city-state but rising out of a wider national life moulded by the reciprocal action of duty and privilege. He seems to carry forward his anger with these writers into his conclusion on Athens and its empire:

> Athenian life presents to us all the features of a decadent civilisation; it is brilliant and artistic, immoral, sceptical upon the surface, and yet is riddled with superstition, which reveals itself with terrible vividness at moments of national crisis, as when Themistocles, on the eve of Salamis, propitiated Bacchus the Cannibal with human victims. The same shallow scepticism, issuing in a fatal levity, and the same essential superstition infected its political activities. The democracy was alternately convulsed by the passions of fear and of vengeance, intoxicated in its triumphs, and humiliated in its defeats. Politics, indeed, with it, was merely another form of superstition, which sought to interrupt rather than to understand those inflexible laws of nature that govern all existence. Its failure has a profound significance for us at the present time. It sacrificed for an illusory freedom the splendid destiny which lay before it: its brilliant gifts failed against the disciplined forces of Sparta; and the great achievements of Greek thinkers were diffused through the world by the triumphs of Alexander. For us there is nothing to emulate in the annals of Athenian democracy; its political and religious fanaticism should be as hateful to us as it was to Socrates, to Thucydides, to Plato, to Aristotle, and above all to Xenophon [...]; and it was because their qualities were lacking in the State as a whole, and neglected by it, that the adventure of Athenian democracy ended in ignominious failure.

The difference between Manning's reviews and his literary articles is in their form. In the latter, since the choice of theme, the method of introducing it, the development of it through his examples and opinions, and the conclusion he wishes to draw, are not predefined; he has a freer field of expression. That freedom is not so much independence from editorial influence, which applies in all aspects of journalism, as from the need to follow a line of inquiry which is beholden to another writer's work. The following articles reflect that difference.

'M. de Gourmont and the Problem of Beauty', *The Little Review*, Vol.V, Nos.10-11, February-March 1919, pp.19-27. This article was commissioned for the journal by its editor Ezra Pound. Manning states that if, as Rémy de Gourmont holds, the aesthetic sense arises from the interaction of sensibility and intellect, then in his own prose the element of sensibility probably preponderates. Manning sees it as a feminine prose, needing only to compare it to the male and objective writing of Mérimée to realise that fact at once. By feminine, he means that de Gourmont's style is passive, not embodying action, is not passionate or mimetic, and is completely reflective.

Manning also sees de Gourmont as an idealist, but after a manner of his own; while not remembering whether he

> mentions Protagoras, a philosopher who had sufficient wit to leave no system behind him, but only a few arresting fragments. One saying of Protagoras, however, that man is the measure of all things, is perhaps the root of M. de Gourmont's idealism; and another, that we cannot know whether the gods exist or not, supplies the irreligion.

What he finds curious in de Gourmont, a disciple of Schopenhauer and of Nietzsche, is that he practically ignores the will to live (associative with events of his life). He adds that whenever man has invented a theory of fatalism, and idealism is one, he has been driven to provide a counterweight to it. Buddhism, which so strongly affected Schopenhauer, assumes a power of denying life, and of ultimate release from the tyranny of the senses.

Christian theology, 'for which de Gourmont has a too facile and instinctive contempt', opposes to predestination the doctrine of free-will, and for Nietzsche will is the sole thing necessary. But de Gourmont deals with it by implication, and as an example notes that in the aesthetic his idea of beauty is inseparably bound up with the idea of procreation. Manning finds 'something unexpectedly näive and charming in the statement, coming from one who denies an absolute beauty, as he denies an absolute truth.'

Manning approaches this notion of sexual influence upon the aesthetic in its relation to the will to live, from the perspective that reproduction is only one of the many forms of expression in which the will manifests itself. He offers the example of hands as one of these expressions. Man, besides being a lover, is a hunter and a warrior; he is a creature of action, avid of experience. Physiologically, man is characterised by the power of motion, and the ability to walk erect; and thus his arms have been freed from pedestrian uses, and his hands have found delightful things to do. It is through the hand that the sense of touch is most commonly conveyed, and touch itself is a sure and delicate sense. In one's hands lies the sense of possession. They have their own language, an eloquence of gesture; they can be filled with 'cherishing caresses and grip mightily in murder'. So curiously personal and intimate are they, that some pretend to read a man's life in his palms, and finger prints furnish a scientific means of identification. Every religion has invested them with supernatural powers. Through hands are transmitted the gifts of the spirit, and by them the sick are healed. Whatever comes from the hands of man is to be judged, technically, by reference to his hands. Manning is satisfied that this example is sufficient enough to show the presence of influences, other than procreation, of the will on the aesthetic.

Will, he continues, is manifested in action, and one of the earliest

expressions of will, is the practice, among primitive people, of magical rites and ceremonies. The will has two objectives: the extension as in the notion of immortality, and the intensification of its experience and action; the will to live and the will to power. Magic was an attempt to attain these objectives through affecting crowd emotions. It expressed the will and sought to liberate man from the narrow limits of his nature; or when it developed into a cult, as in the worship of Dionysis, it extended his personality. The relevant god was Eleutherios, the deliverer, and sex, considered as an element in orgiastic rites, or as an object, applied differently. To De Gourmont's belief that love is a physiological need, Manning adds that the real question is whether the idea of beauty originates through the deflection or the thwarting of physiological needs, as distinct from love; it being a physiological necessity that an amoeba should propagate itself by simple division from the parent body, and reproduction in this case is independent of both art and sex. But magic, curiously enough, Manning says, is a physiological need, and beauty is action, born of the mimesis of magic attempting to influence the blind and irrational forces of nature. Even in sculpture and painting beauty is still movement, not arrested, not incomplete, but limited to a swift instant of time, and within that limit single and continuous. He concludes that this conception of beauty as a function frees us from the artificial distinction between form and content.

There is a footnote to this paper, in which Ezra Pound and Manning engage in one more of their quarrelsome exchanges. Pound as editor writes:

> I need scarcely say that I disagree with Mr Manning's point of view, [*sic*] The article seems to me a typical expression of one holding ideas and affected by ideas in exactly the manner De Gourment [*sic*] never held, and never was by them affected. The doctrine that the hand predisposes the mind to certain aptitudes is combatted [*sic*], I think convincingly, by Gourmont in "Physiologie de l'Amour." [...] On writing to Mr Manning that one of his phrases was likely to be misunderstood by a public to which the term decadent (dee-kay-d'nt) conveys the impression of [a] young man doped with opium in the act of dyeing his finger nails with green ink, I received the following note which I shall leave as conclusion. - E.P.

"Of course there is a great deal of truth in Gourmont's notion. Beauty would always excite the sexual instinct. His fault is that he juggles with physiological, psychological and metaphysical terms. I have looked at the notion of beauty historically: and thus find its origin in magic - that is in so far as we are concerned with the beauty of art. Magic might originate from dreams, as when the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and the great majority of dreams are erotic in tendency. But art has separated itself from its parent, and intellectualized itself; as religion and metaphysics did in different directions also.
Damn the American, or any other, public anyway.
Yours, etc., *F.M.*"

'Poetry in Prose', *The Chapbook*, No.22, April 1921, pp.10-15. This article is one in a group of three discussing the relationship between poetry and prose, the other two being written by T.S. Eliot and Richard Aldington. Whereas Eliot remained cautious of crediting prose with poetic characteristics, Manning was always sure that prose can be poetic. Manning's article traces the development of poetry and prose in the literature of classical Greece.

He commences his outline from Plato's treatment of art as a kind of child's play, and artists as mimics, wizards, and makers of images:

> but his affectation of superiority was not intended to be taken too seriously, it was part of the Platonic or Socratic irony veiling the serious intention beneath it. He was before Aristotle in defining the method of art as *mimesis*, and its function as *katharsis*, but he touched on art only in its relation to the doctrine of sense. The aesthetic problem and the artistic problem are separate and distinct: the proposition that 'beauty is truth, truth beauty' has no interest to the artist as artist: he is not immediately concerned with either beauty or truth; he is concerned with magic, and images, and mimicry.

From Plato's method of art defined as *mimesis*, Manning sees him proceed to distinguish between the imitation of reality and the imitation of phantasy, with his object being the ultimate reality underlying the fleeting appearances of sensation. His object was philosophic, not artistic, Manning affirms.

Manning cites the treatise on poetry by Plato's pupil Aristotle, as the supreme example of literary criticism, but it was of Platonic derivation, and in it Aristotle limited himself to showing the development of Attic tragedy. There he was concerned with the essential nature of poetry, naming verse as not essential. The imitation of a measure in verse is not poetry, but poetry is an imitation of life. This, Manning states, was what Plato intended when he described artists as mimics, wizards, and image makers. Aristotle located the origin of tragedy in the dithyramb, leading then to the identification of three kinds of poetry recognised by the Greeks - dramatic, dithyrambic or lyric, and epic; and if that part of the epic which is not dramatic is dithyrambic, then the dithyramb originally was a kind of narrative ballad. From this Manning asks, how did the dithyramb become mimetic?

In answer, he commences with one derivation of the word 'tragic', counter to the usual attribution 'he-goat', being attributed to *tragizein* 'to be cracked in the voice' as of a boy's voice. A tragic song thus becomes one of irregular pitch, or as Aristotle observed, 'he who feels the emotions to be described will be most convincing; distress and anger for instance, are portrayed most truthfully by one who is feeling them'; and the whole range of emotion can be imitated in the voice.

Manning connects Greek tragedy with the great choral odes in which poem, melody and dance are integrated by rhythm. But the Lesbian school of poets stood apart from the later poets of the mainland, and when Demetrius reported Sappho's deliberately realist language applied purposefully by her, he could not imagine it sung to the lyre or chanted by a chorus unless there was such a thing as a *choros dialektikos*, a speaking chorus. In tragedy, Manning sees the same realism entering the methods of dramatic poetry; the simplest form of tragedy being that in which the primitive ballad has, through the application of realism, become a *choros dialektikos*.

After further development of his case, Manning continues:

> It is a vulgar error to consider prose as though it were almost a synonym for language; and thus no more than the rude material with which the poet works. On the contrary, poetry is continually tending toward the form of prose. Verse is a primitive, a spontaneous and irrational form of expression. In the imaginative use of language, that is to say in literature, there are three stages; the dithyrambic or lyric, the epic or tragic, and finally the dialectic or rhetorical. Just as the original nature of the dithyramb persists in the epic or in the tragedy, so, too, it persists in the great orators.

He quotes widely to show that Plato wrote dithyrambic or lyrical prose, and that it was also favoured by the Peripatetics, as well as by Xenophon and Herodotus. Further, every figure used in rhetoric is derived from the poets and more especially from the lyrical poets of the mainland, Stesichorus, Simonides, and Pindar. Terms like *periodos* and *kolon* originated in the technique of the lyrical poets. Just as the rhythm of early dance measures was governed by the beat of the foot, the rhythm of prose is governed by breathing; style in prose, as eloquence in oratory, is thus a physical fact, for the author is speaking, though it may be only to himself. Since the rhythm of prose depends entirely upon breathing, it reflects perfectly the physical distress of one labouring under a passion, or touched either by sorrow or joy. It may, then, be completely mimetic. Thus 'tragedy may find its complete nature in prose, which no less than verse may concern itself with magic, and mimicry, and the making of images.

'Critic and Aesthetic', *The Quarterly Review*, Vol.242, No.480, July 1924, pp.123-44. This essay, compact in its structure but expansive in its coverage, is an example of Manning's best scholarship and systematic expression against which any précis would do it an injustice. Again he bases his argument on the literature and philosophy of classical Greece, but progresses beyond the ground he covered in the preceding three articles here to consider the concept of art in modern practical terms.

Manning commences with the idea of *aisthesis* taken from Plato's

'Theaetetus', and advances through several theories developed around it by Plato and his contemporaries to reach the majority opinion in the 'Symposium' that the idea of beauty is purely sexual in origin. Manning questions whether the opinion of the guests at Plato's banquet was representative of Greek opinion that they saw in art only a sexual desire diverted from its true object of reproduction. Others of Plato's era held that there are many forms of creation, art being a parallel form of creation or begetting, and the function of art need not originate in that of sex. Love, like any other form of human activity, may be the subject-matter of art. Likewise there are many forms of love, which is the desire to possess endlessly the ideal, and to possess a thing one must bring it under the control of one's will, so that it is assimilated into one's being. Thus hunger, or want, is the begetter of love. Even the desire for immortality is included, by being the desire to possess and assimilate the whole of space and time.

Manning looks for a ruling to distinguish those qualities in a work of art which make it an immediate if transitory success, from those which are always considered beautiful and yet appeal to only a few minds. He dismisses the judgment of a crowd as being fallacious, not in the assumption that the crowd is incapable of judgment, but in the assumption that art is addressed to the crowd. Art is like religion in that its appeal is directly to the individual; when it ceases to appeal directly to the individual, and seeks to comprehend a number of individuals, or of groups, within the limits of some formula or creed, it ceases to be art and becomes merely a mechanical operation. The moral judgment of the group is irrelevant because, while in religion and in art the creation of value may have moral consequences, both religious and artistic values may be in conflict with current morality, as for instance in the 'Antigone' of Sophocles.

Art considers value alone without reference to its moral consequences

or its factual origin; and if the world of science is at once the most abstract and the most concrete of worlds, the world of art is at once the most general and the most individual. The limit of intensity in emotion is reached in situations where the issue depends entirely on the decision made by the individual mind alone without reference to any 'world', and such situations are common to all individuals, and a part of a general experience.

Beauty, in the general sense of the term, is not always relevant to art. Manning considers the contention that physical beauty is physical fitness. A beautiful man or woman is one who corresponds to a normal racial type, as the young athletes of Greek sculpture conform to it. Beauty is a mean, but Greek art is above discussion because the Greek mind was saturated with the ideas of measure, unity, balance, order, and proportion. Such physical fitness may of course contribute to the welfare of the race, but one usually strives to attain that simply because its possession is a pleasure. Manning draws upon several examples of the value element in literature, sculpture and music to explain his belief, but he concentrates in detail on painting in its modern context.

He sees the viewpoint from which artists consider their sitters, or the objects they seek to represent, as a critical point of view. Any beautiful or cultivated sitter to a portrait painter is already, without any intervention on the part of the painter, a consummate and perfect work of art, freely presenting the painter with the ideal synthesis which they have composed out of the elements of their own character, and they are their own medium of expression. Each sitter is unconcerned by the painter's examination, for the experience of each in life has fitted them to provoke curiosity while apparently remaining indifferent to it. However the elaborate simplicity of the ideal character built up by these 'beautiful or accomplished' sitters, from the material of their subconscious, is dissolved

under the painter's analysis to regard them as a type only.

Manning sums up his case thus:

> An object is desirable because the will has endowed it, imaginatively, with value; subsequently the desire is satisfied or frustrated; either we possess the object which we desired, or it has escaped us. If we possess it, its value may or may not be diminished; but the desire for it has ceased to be active; or the peaceful enjoyment of it may alternate with a new disturbance of desire at the threat of loss. If we fail to secure the object desired, the value may be enhanced, or the desire diverted to some other object, with or without some loss of value in the previous object of desire. In all these cases the value is in proportion to the amount of energy expended in the act of attaining the object desired. Prior to its attainment we attach value to the object itself; subsequently we attach it to the action by which the object was attained; there may be anterior to both, a pleasure and therefore value in the desire itself, before it is sufficiently strong to be precipitated into action. But the value of anything is most sharply and clearly expressed in our effort to attain it, and at the highest tension of that effort. The will, the desire, may be exhausted in action, but the value remains once it has been completely realised. To the mystic it is the revelation of 'grace', to the artist it is the revelation of 'beauty'.

It may seem from this, Manning continues, that there is a subjective technique in the artist, just as there is a subjective *mimesis* in the spectator. The artist has consciously or unconsciously built up a scheme of 'value' for himself in his subjective criticism of his experience. From the point of view thus gained he analyses the objective synthesis presented to him in the person of the sitter, and having dissolved it, he replaces it by his own synthesis, injecting into it his own value, his own 'truth', apart from which the sitter is nothing more or less than an irrelevant fact. This transference of value from the mind of the artist to his work is what Manning means by style, no merely superficial quality, but the very essence of all great art.

'An Introductory Essay' to Walter Charleton's *Epicurus's Morals*, [1656], republished by Peter Davies in 1926, pp.v-xli. Manning's informative Introduction comprises biographical notes on Walter Charleton; comments on the works of Diogenes Laertius (3rd century) whose *The Lives and Opinions of*

the Philosophers is the chief source of Charleton's material on Epicurus; biographical details of Epicurus; and an explanation of Epicurus's principles.

Manning commences his account with the statement that Epicurus's influence not only during his life but after his death, and apart altogether from the personal charm which he undoubtedly had, was that he set free the individual conscience and enabled it to realize its true nature, as perfectly as the conditions of life allowed. Epicurus was reproached with having subordinated natural to moral philosophy, and with having excluded from his theory of physics any opinion which might have troubled that serene enjoyment of life which he set out as the supreme end. It would be more true to say, Manning believes, that he did not separate them, but reconciled them. His theory of indeterminacy in the movement of atoms, the denial of the law in logic of the excluded middle, and the doctrine of free-will, were different aspects of the same law. Rejecting the logic of his day, he recognised the need for a logic of facts as distinct from a logic of concepts. Through his studies in ethics, he held that pleasure is the chief good, by which he meant freedom from pain and anxiety, not (as the term 'epicurean' has since come to mean) one who indulges sensual pleasures without stint.

Continuing, Manning details the arguments made in classical times against Epicurus's theories and provides reasoning counter to those arguments. To the Epicurean, *autarkeia*, a perfect self-mastery, was the condition of any free activity of the mind, of right choice; for as Epicurus said:

> We regard self-mastery as a great good, not so as in all cases to limit ourselves to little, but so as to be contented with little if we have not much, since we are fully persuaded that they have the smoothest enjoyment of plenty who stand least in need of it, and that all those things which our nature needs are easy, and only our idle fancies difficult to gain.

Manning sees the fundamental error of misinterpreting the doctrines of

Epicurus as the attempts to read into him a metaphysical sense which was never intended.

These miscellaneous journal articles reveal Manning's extensive classical learning and artistic sensitivity, examples from which, with viewpoints deriving from them, he uses to illustrate and emphasise points of argument, comparison and description throughout his writing.

CHAPTER 4

MAJOR PROSE WORKS

Manning produced few major prose works, by which is meant writings of book length which achieved some recognition for their author. Three publications - *Scenes and Portraits*, *The Life of Sir William White* and *The Middle Parts of Fortune* - meet those criteria, while a fourth work outside them, *The Golden Coach*, a manuscript which never developed beyond several dozen pages, is included because of the exceptional amount of time and thought Manning put into it.

Scenes and Portraits, written during Manning's most prolonged energetic and productive period while he was actively engaged in writing poetry, was sandwiched between *The Vigil of Brunhild* and *Poems*. In common with both of them it explores aspects of faith. *The Life of Sir William White* and *The Middle Parts of Fortune* were written well after the publication of *Eidola*, his last significant poetry, while his preoccupation with *The Golden Coach* extended throughout practically all of his literary life following the praise he received for *Scenes and Portraits*. Manning's early poetic fervour apparently cooled, eventually to be replaced entirely by a concentration on prose. Some discussion of this change in genre is appropriate.

As distinct from his robust narrative poetry couched in irony, his shorter poems dwell upon self-indulgent spirit voices. These regurgitate their misfortunes from a misty, Swinburnean, 'world forgetting, by the world forgot'[1] environment, a literary conceit which was fast losing favour by the turn of the century. Manning came to recognise this himself, for his poetry assumes a sense of completion with the publication of *Eidola*. Two other factors contribute to his poetic decline, those being his deteriorating health and the prolonged, unsettled living conditions he endured during and after the war years. His fluency always depended upon freedom from distractions. Another factor is the revaluation he made of his literary

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[1] Alexander Pope, 'Eloisa to Abelard', l.208.

priorities, standards and expressive techniques arising from his war experiences. But at the time of *Scenes and Portraits* Manning lived in scholarly content, still engrossed with his prose-poetic irony under the scrutiny of Arthur Galton's nineteenth century standards.

For the best part of the two decades up to the years 1905-09 in which Manning wrote and published *Scenes and Portraits*, the reading public was being progressively assailed with new literary fashions by authors who not merely challenged, but overturned, long established nineteenth century standards along with the more recent Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic Movements, to some aspects of both of which Manning harked back. During the 1890s Thomas Hardy, Henry James and G.B. Shaw helped shape the modernising trend and by 1909 they were the Old Lions among Ford Madox Hueffer's *Les Jeunes*. Their writing carried the reading public to new levels of expectation, heralding a new era in literature with glimpses of Nietzschean self-realization and Ibsenist hope.

Following them other writers emerged eager to maintain the momentum and gather pace, in Gissing, Yeats, Pinero, George Moore, Wells, Bram Stoker, Conrad, Bennett, Samuel Butler, Synge, Forster and Chesterton. Their works covered the entire literary spectrum, from poetry and prose to theatre. Each individuality is clear-cut and separate from its fellows; one does not compare Pinero with Synge and Bennett, Butler with Wells and Moore, Conrad with Forster, or Yeats with any of them, because each in his own way is incomparable. Manning, keen to make his own name, appeared among this new generation with his publication, *Scenes and Portraits*. Whereas they were experimental and progressive, Manning was seen to be traditionalist and retrogressive. His book, while scholarly and questioning, failed to attract a wide readership and has remained unknown to subsequent generations.

Although the above writers by no means presented a common literary front they strongly advocated the theory that style is related to theme. What unites them therefore is that from their early efforts grew the generally held Modernist belief in extreme individuality of style 'advanced' ideas. But while Manning grew up in this changing environment, and in due course came to fraternise with some of the leading practitioners, he also kept faith with Arthur Galton's teaching. With this choice came its consequence, that of being left behind.

i. 1909 and 1930: *Scenes and Portraits*

This book began as separate 'stories' first mentioned by Manning to his Oxford friend Fairfax, in letters dating from June 1907, some two years before its publication:

> I am reading Curtius' *Greek History*. Curtius is almost as monumental as Mommsen. By the way, you must read Renan's preface to *L'Histoire du Peuple d'Israel* where he defines the influence of the Hellenic, the Hebraic, and the Roman genius upon the modern world. [...] Galton is taking two of my stories, written two years ago, for you to read; I shall put a few poems in with them, and will you send them back as soon as you have read them?[2]

Manning's long reply to Fairfax's prompt and obviously enthusiastic response to the stories and poems contains a detailed explanation of the poems as well as this insight into the evolution of the prose pieces:

> when you compare me to Pierre Loüys I can only bow feebly [...]. Curiously enough when I wrote those stories in 1905 Mrs Shakespear, of whom I have spoken to you, said that the style and atmosphere reminded her of Loüys; and that she thought I used the English language as a medium for writing in French. The imitation is quite unconscious; and may arise, subjectively, from my constant reading of Renan and Anatole France, who are,

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[2] Fairfax collection, letter No.27, 2 June 1907.

> I imagine, responsible in a great degree for the smooth and fluent style of Loüys. [...] I am sending you a dialogue which is contemporary with the stories: I always meant to rewrite it, but had not the time; as I have not even corrected it you must forgive all the mistakes. [...] P.S. I cannot find the dialogue at the moment. As to publishing the stories I have three others planned and half-written, which may make a book as you suggest.[3]

It appears then that some credit for the realisation of *Scenes and Portraits* must go to Fairfax.

Evidence of Manning's breadth of reading is clear in this, his second book, following soon after *The Vigil of Brunhild*. Its thematic construction and attention to historical detail show indebtedness to several sources. One is Walter Pater's historical fantasies presented in *Imaginary Portraits*, with their reflections on early promise broken by early death, as well as *Marius the Epicurean* which indicates Pater's attraction to paganism amid the religious turmoil of Marcus Aurelius's Rome. Another is Robert Browning's *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in Their Day*, a book of poems in blank verse which matches historical figures in conversation with others of Browning's lifetime. Walter Savage Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* collecting dialogues between the famous dead is relevant too, as is Manning's own research into and interpretation of, the ancients Socrates, Lucretius, Martial, Pliny the Younger, St Paul and Epicurus, supplemented by familiarity with works by the more recent Niccolò Machiavelli, Ernest Renan and Anatole France.

This book's concern is with the questions, does God exist? and, if He exists, is He solicitous for humanity's welfare? Its first six stories examine the concept of deity in pagan and Christian terms. Manning postulates that historically certain common issues have complicated and obscured this concept as different civilisations have arisen and developed

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[3] Fairfax collection, letter No.28, 9 June 1907.

their own canonical systems. High among those issues, as he traces the spread of Christianity, he places the gradual superposition of church dogma over Scriptural interpretation; the interaction, mostly conflicting and implacable, between religion and politics in the struggle for supremacy between Church and State; and the rise of secularism in conjunction with socialism. He personalises the argument by using historical characters conspicuous in their times for expressing their either impartial or inflexible beliefs during periods of contentious religious rethinking. Their presence in the book relays a continuity of thought throughout the fragmented episodes and, more particularly, represents the conservative and radical elements voiced in each era right up to the time of Manning's youth. In the seventh, final story, 'Apologia Dei', added in 1930 as a form of epilogue, Manning has God lecture Satan, telling him, 'I have set you to be lord of that temporal world of oppositions, and master of time.'

Strongly characteristic of each story is Manning's carefully wrought historical setting, plausible and economical in evoking believable contemporary scenes and sensibilities reinforcing his theme through

> the terse phrase, the very simplicity of which bites like an acid, so keen it is.(215)

In these words he has Machiavelli describe Dante Alighieri's poetry in one of the stories, 'At San Casciano', but they are equally appropriate to his own writing. His Preface to the 1909 edition (deleted from the 1930 edition) condenses his previous broad historical and philosophical sweep into an appreciation of Euripides (480-406 BC) and Ernest Renan (1832-92), both of whom questioned the morality of exploiting legends and chronicles in order to give objective reality to religious beliefs:

> [Euripides and Renan] were both equally saturated with the scientific spirit of their age, though inclining to the mystic temperament. They were both quickened by a deep love and pity for humanity in all its moods and aspirations. They both delighted keenly in popular legends and the mythology of the country-side. Both were strongly individual minds, sensitive, reacting to every contemporary influence, and yet preserving

> their peculiar distinction in thought and style. Unbound by any system, moving easily in all, they sought by the free exercise of reason and a profound irony to cleanse their ages of much perilous stuff; and although Renan was not a Christian in the common sense of the word, and though Euripides turned away from the gods of his day, yet each tried to save out of the ruins of their faiths the subtile and elusive spirit which had informed them; that divine light and inspiration, which is continually expressing itself in new figures, and cannot be imprisoned in any vessel of human fashioning.[4]

His final essay 'Apologia Dei', in the later edition, makes a more general statement on the expectations of mankind.

'The King of Uruk' which opens the collection, is a highly original and provocative interpretation of 'the Fall of Man'. Of its two protagonists, Merodach is the autocratic king of ancient Uruk (Iraq) who luxuriates in the splendour of his position but is dejected by his mortality and the transience of both civilisation and the universe, while the other, Bagoas, his high priest, sceptical of human aspirations, stumbles upon the Garden of Eden during a restorative excursion into the country. The narrative is mostly presented through dialogue, of which that between Merodach and Bagoas, exchanging their viewpoints, gives direction to the story. Bagoas reports to Merodach his meeting with Adam and Eve in their rustic simplicity. His prediction that the seemingly insignificant Adam will found a lineage extending into millennia, whereas Merodach's name and exploits will be long forgotten, intrigues and alarms the king. Merodach grows anxious for his dynasty. He sets out next day with his family, courtiers, and a retinue of thousands, to confront Adam.

In the meantime Adam and Eve, following their encounter with Bagoas, sense a difference within themselves. Their bliss has changed to vexation. Under the serpent's 'malignant' gaze they have eaten the apple of knowledge from the forbidden tree, become strangely restive, are dissatisfied with

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[4] Frederic Manning, *Scenes and Portraits*, 1909 edition, Preface pp.v-xii.

Eden, and flee into the desert at the approach of Merodach and his host. Merodach plunders the Garden of Eden in his unsuccessful search for Adam. He then banquets there with his family and Bagoas who relates the Babylonian account of the Creation while they feast. Of the two legends within that account Bagoas chooses the Flood legend which bears closely upon the narrative of Genesis. Merodach, angry with Bagoas for disparaging its veracity and also for ignoring the second, more allusive, legend which centres upon Merodach the god[5], interjects and insinuates his own ancestry into Bagoas's tale. A subplot dealing with the love between Merodach's youthful daughter Princess Candace and an eligible young kinsman named Adamaharon replicates the Adam and Eve component. At Candace's bidding Adamaharon picks and eats the last remaining apple from the forbidden tree; they declare their love for each other and Merodach gives his blessing to their marriage.

As the company leaves the despoiled Garden of Eden, Bagoas pauses before the apple tree and looks into the eyes of the great serpent:

> "It is the will of the gods," he said, with his ironical smile. "I am but their minister, the mere instrument of their designs; so what part shall I claim in this adventure?" The snake watched him fixedly.(48)

However Manning saves his most telling irony for the epilogue of the story:

> But many years afterwards a woman sitting by the door of a hut in the desert, watching the quiet stars quicken as the day died, drew two young boys toward her, and told them the story of the garden. Her face was tranquil, like the face of one who has grief for a companion; and the boys were clothed in goat-skins.
> "And," she said, looking into the embers of the fire, " the man counselled me to eat, saying, if ye eat of the fruit ye shall know."
> Adam suddenly appeared in the firelight. He had heard the last

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[5] J R Dummelow (Ed.), *A Commentary On The Holy Bible By Various Writers*, New York: Macmillan, 1973 [1908], p.xxxii - 'Merodach, a solar deity, known as Bel, and regarded as the supreme god and patron deity of Babylon, was chosen as the champion of the gods. He vanquished Tiamat, cut her body in two, and with one half of it made a firmament supporting the upper waters of the sky; see on Genesis, i.6-8. Merodach then fixed the signs of the zodiac in the sky as the stations of the great gods, and also placed the moon in the heavens to determine the months.'

> words. "It was the serpent," he said suspiciously. "You always said it was the serpent." And Eve answered quickly, drawing her children closer to her. "Yea, it was the serpent! I forgot. It was the serpent!"(49-50)

Manning has skilfully conflated Babylonian legend and Biblical history with his own allegory into a humanised reappraisal of the Fall in which the serpent becomes an omniscient sinister observer (Satan?) while Bagoas, a worldly-wise but effete divine, assumes the serpent's rôle as Satan's vehicle for the temptation, thereby giving a neat twist to St Paul's edict, 'Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.'[6]

The second commentary takes place 'At The House of Euripides' in fifth-century BC Athens.[7] Gathered there is a group of philosophers and their followers who discourse together after having dined well. Proceedings commence with a light-hearted exchange between Socrates and a minor character who attempts to use Socratic reasoning against Socrates to show that one may know nothing and everything together. However the discussion then turns serious as next Socrates engages Euripides in an analysis of his play *Hippolytus*, Socrates' purpose being to elicit Euripides' stand on apportioning good and evil between the gods and humanity. While they agree to the generalisation 'that the idea of divinity is exclusive of all evil', Euripides' own conclusion is more charged with drama:

> behind the veil of man's weaving is a figure of singular beauty, wild but gentle; a divinity who promises to the restless and troubled spirit of man joy in life and peace after death.(69)

Conversation thus far has paved the way for the highlight of the evening, a prepared paper by Protagoras questioning whether or not the gods exist at all, a subject highly inflammatory in the current political mood of Athens, which is suspicious of sophists such as Euripides, Socrates and Protagoras, whose teaching is seen as a threat to its democratic institutions and

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[6] Romans, v.12.

[7] This story parodys Plato's *Symposium*.

religious traditions.

Protagoras concludes his detailed reasoning into the gods' actuality by pronouncing that the evidence, both for and against, is beguiling, analogous with the myth of Echo in that the truth always recedes as one approaches it. However another of the group, Pythodorus, accuses Protagoras of blasphemy by 'cloak[ing] his impiety in smooth phrases and suave periods'(78). He leaves, intent upon impeaching Protagoras before the authorities, and is accompanied by the more squeamish of those present. The remaining syndicate discourses at length on the nature of truth, i.e. as derived from observation, taking as one example the reasoning of Pythodorus. As dawn approaches the assembly disperses, their talk terminated with a quotation by Socrates from a declaration he had extracted from a prophetess:

> 'Then the gods exist, Diotima?' I asked her. 'Certainly the gods exist,' she answered; 'but they exist in a way which is peculiar to themselves.'(93)[8]

Manning underscores that peculiarity. Two of those who had attended Euripides' party meet again some time later. They discuss the latest news buzzed about town that Protagoras, after leaving Athens was shipwrecked and, alone among those aboard, was drowned. The conclusion they draw sustains the uncertainty of the gods' existence, with the succinctness, almost savage, of classical Greek expression:

> "The gods avenge themselves," said Hermogenes.
> "So men say."(93)

In 'The Friend of Paul' Manning betrays his delight in Epicurean principles. The story is set in Gades (Cadiz) during the first century AD, where Serenus, a wealthy and ageing Roman, owns a magnificent estate. Manning describes Serenus's Epicurean lifestyle there in lingering detail. The visit to Serenus by two friends, local Roman officers, forms the occasion

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[8] Adapted by Manning from Plato's *Symposium*.

for this exchange of views. From them he learns of Seneca's suicide after having fallen out of favour with Nero. They exchange views on Seneca's Stoicism, admired by one of the friends but opposed by Serenus who unfavourably contrasts the 'loving God' of Seneca's Stoicism, 'whose will we should obey without a murmur', with the Epicurean gods, 'serene and untroubled in their abode, where no whisper of mortal anguish ever penetrates'. However he finds it disturbing to detect some similarities between Seneca's beliefs and those of the new Christian faith which is beginning to infiltrate the Roman world:

> I have heard a man, who was a Christian, speak in almost the identical words of Seneca. The cardinal point of his doctrine was not the Stoic apathy, but the recommendation of sympathy, that is the difference between them. Here and there he uses the same phrases and illustrations as Seneca. It shows how widespread the new spirit is.(111)

Serenus has experienced this new spirit personally while on a visit to Corinth, where the man he heard was the apostle Paul, instructing at clandestine meetings Serenus chanced to attend in the home of a business associate. He relates to his friends the impression Paul made upon him.

He confesses astonishment at the complexity, conviction and direct relevance to life, offering hope in adversity, he hears in Paul's discourse which was to become known as the 'First Epistle'. The message is augmented for Serenus by Corinth's Prefect, Gallio, who enlightens him on that city's degeneracy, typical of the developing Roman predicament -

> the world and the Empire drifting toward a complete breakdown. Civilisation [...] filled man with desires which he can never gratify; it tended to accentuate the difference between the rich and the poor, and the whole question resolved itself [...] into a question of politics. The Roman stock was perishing, and its place was being taken by a horde of servile races. The people were only being kept in check by a system of doles, and amused by pageants. The burden of taxation was insufferable.
> "It may last our time," he said [...] "but the end is inevitable. A revolution, or a series of great wars, might carry us forward for a time. We are suffering from a mortal growth, which brings decay."(121)

Serenus is puzzled to find himself comforted and reassured when recalling

Paul's words after being informed of a sudden deep family misfortune back home in Gades.

Drawn by curiosity to subsequent meetings, Serenus is spellbound by the emotional charge in Paul's voice - 'He dealt with speech as one dealing with iron in the fire, hammering out the words.'(128) Yet Serenus remains sceptical about Christianity. When asked by Paul whether he has derived any benefits so far from this new teaching, Serenus has to admit to none that his own gods cannot provide. Hurt by the rebuff, Paul blames himself for expecting too much too soon, but reprimands Serenus for allowing the trappings of wealth to obstruct his spiritual vision. During the remainder of his stay in Corinth Serenus learns of Paul's background - from a reformed persecutor of Christians, who was converted by divine intervention to become subsequently an apostle of the Christian faith, all of which Serenus can explain away rationally, although he concedes that

> behind Paul, the man of fire, whose life was an odyssey, full of arduous endeavour and storm, was another figure, a figure of singular beauty, before whom even the fire of Paul's ardour flickered and was tamed, the Christ whom man had crucified, and who had redeemed man from sin and death.(142)

'The great central points of their teaching meant nothing to me,' Serenus informs his friends. 'The promise for me was void; but the conditions of the promise, there was the charm.'(142) At his final meeting with Paul, he is told,

> "'If you would but close your eyes and put out your hand trustfully, God would lead you through the darkness. You are almost of us; and yet you are not of us. There is a barrier which you cannot pass: you cannot believe.'(146)

Serenus is interrupted by dusk gathering about them in the garden. His friends and he separate, after arranging to dine together later. As Serenus approaches his villa he imagines he sees the figure of Paul among his household slaves, talking with them.

A space of some twelve centuries separates the recalcitrance of Serenus

from the setting for the clash of wills Manning portrays next in 'The Jesters Of The Lord'. Pope Innocent III and St Francis of Assisi are the disputants. They are 'jesters' in the ironical sense that a cardinal adviser to the Pope, witnessing the audience, is amused to see how easily they detect each others' vulnerabilities without being aware of their own. While writing this story Manning refers to it in three letters to Fairfax,[9] explaining in one his concern to present Francis with just the right touch of credibility:

> I have finished Saint Francis [...]. [The story] is the shortest, and has been the most difficult to write: the charm of Saint Francis is so extremely delicate that the least touch reduces it to absurdity; and as he is the one saint in the calendar that I honestly admire, almost worship, I have been terrified, lest I should turn out a caricature. At the same time, I have had to be ironical.[10]

In the event, there are traces of quixotism evident in his characterisation of the Saint. Had Manning been confronted with that opinion he would probably have been indignant, just as he was in reality when he resented the accusations of 'Tennysonian overtones' in *The Vigil of Brunhild*.

Francis is in Rome to obtain the Pope's approval for his proposed new religious order. However the Pope is reluctant to consent because in his judgment Francis's rule for the order is 'too severe, and such an ideal beyond all human strength' that it is bound to fail. Once established therefore, and weakened in zeal, the order would become an embarrassment to the Church. In defending his cause Francis combines sincerity, eloquence and perseverance with virtuous guile to win over the Pope, and when successful returns to Assisi fittingly penitent but victorious, at the head of his small band of newly designated Franciscans. However during the journey back home their piety is tested. Their march lies through arid, sun-baked country where they collapse from heat exhaustion, which Francis accepts as a divine

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[9] Fairfax collection, letters No.44, 3 June 1908; No.45, 29 June 1908 and No.53, 7 September 1908.

[10] Fairfax collection, letter No.53, 7 September 1908.

judgment, placing himself at God's mercy. Fortuitously a passing wine merchant revives them from his wares and reproves them as fools for getting into that situation, with which censure Francis agrees for:

> We are sinful men, who follow the way which God hath shown us, and have no wisdom in worldly things. We are fools for Christ's sake. Yea, we are the fools of God, and by our folly seek to draw men toward him. But thy kindliness and mercy shown to us, my brother, is a good deed, which like a seed thrown in the ground shall flourish and bear fruit.(183)

That final encounter completes the irony attending 'jesters'. Francis's admission confirms his 'jester' status while including his companions as well, along with, on reflection, the prosaic wine merchant whose timely intervention has marked him by Francis as an 'angel sent from God'.

The Renaissance period in Italy is Manning's next chosen stop-over, 'At San Casciano', to record a conversation he contrives there between Thomas Cromwell and Niccolò Machiavelli, occurring some time before Cromwell's influential but ultimately fatal appointment to the service of Henry VIII. Cromwell is a guest in the home of Machiavelli. He takes advantage of his stay at San Casciano to read from Machiavelli's extensive library and is 'content to sit in his [Machiavelli's] company gleaning the ripe ears of his wisdom'(198), in particular to extract his host's views on a topical ferment greatly interesting them both, the political rivalry inherent between Church and State.

Machiavelli asserts that the Church's power should be attacked through 'the fat bellies of the monks'(204), whose greed and obscenity are the common gossip of Europe yet who constantly replenish the Church's treasuries with the offerings of the poor, given in return for pardons and indulgences. The two radicals develop their case, using Dante Alighieri's *De Monarchia* as a starting point. Machiavelli acknowledges Dante's poetry is 'full of a sudden wilful beauty, a delight in natural things . . . [ranging] from tumult to calm'(208-11), but disparages his political attitude as a 'picture of the

ideal state'(212) which later, in the *Divina Commedia*, fades into cynicism resulting from his rough treatment by the Guelf factions. Like Dante, Machiavelli has suffered at the hands of politicians and believes that, 'Everything is subject to change and the vicissitudes of fortune; but passing from change to change all things return more or less to their former state'(209). With this in mind he advocates a fresh beginning.

Cromwell responds enthusiastically. He professes to have heard the lectures of Colet and Erasmus heralding, in his mind, the establishment of secular power. Machiavelli is less sure of its coming. Although he agrees there are new perceptions astir, he cautions that freedom may be a deliverance from one set of bonds into another. However Cromwell, warming to his ideals, defends Erasmus's alienation from the opposed schools of schismatics and monks because they are equally ignorant, intolerant and 'entangled in the webs of vain theological sophistries'(220), and supports Erasmus's strategy of the slow growth and penetration of an intellectual party into the Church hierarchy to bring about its eventual reformation. Machiavelli has little faith in such an influence 'except as a preparation for the combat'(220). His assessment of Erasmus is much more practical and limited:

> What I praise in Erasmus is that clearness of judgment, which insists that the Bible should be read as any other book, that each man should go direct to the source, and fill his own vessel; for by that means they will recognise the chicanery, which isolates texts and phrases, and distorts their sense.(220)

He adds that the regeneration of Europe will not come to pass by any gentle methods. Although the humanists already, through their questioning, have made inroads into the fastness of established rule, yet, 'Pope and Emperor remain to the majority the bases of the social order'(220). But eventually, Machiavelli continues, when all realise that the humanists' hermeneutics threaten the prescribed articles of faith which are clearly in danger of overthrow, then will begin in earnest the reaction against humanism. 'Upon

what arm', Machiavelli asks, 'will the humanists rely to defend them?'(221).

This is Cromwell's cue to introduce a new personality into the conversation through, 'our young King of England, who hath grown under the influence of men similar to Erasmus'(221). He hails Henry VIII as a potentially determined reformer, implacable to opposition, unforgiving of those who disappoint him, and capable not only of making the people's hopes his own but also of promoting his private schemes as being beneficial to the public good. Again Machiavelli is sceptical. He infers that discretion rather than bluster will be needed to bring about the reform they seek. In attempting to mend their difference over Henry, Cromwell admits that at times Henry, like previous reformers, may find it expedient to sacrifice to public feeling a minister seen as over-reactive. But in his opinion any minister discharging Henry's policies should be strong and alert enough to forestall possible reprisals made against him as Henry's scapegoat. To this vanity Machiavelli remains ironically mute.

Manning completes his 1909 edition with 'The Paradise Of The Disillusioned', bringing his selected dialogues up to contemporary times with an imagined meeting in afterlife between the souls of the recently deceased Pope Leo XIII and Ernest Renan. The two former militant theologians are pleasantly surprised to encounter each other here in the branch of paradise reserved for unbelievers, like Dante's Limbo for Aristotle. They celebrate their propinquity with an amicable exchange of views on a range of open-ended modern social questions.

Renan presents to Leo his prognosis of the world's humanity becoming materialistic, stereotyped, controlled by examinations and trade unions under some sort of inept bureaucracy, a condition Leo identifies as socialism. Throughout history no polity, Renan contends, from the ancient world to

primitive Christianity to France in 1789 and since, has been free from socialistic groups. 'Socialism is neither a remedy nor a disease, but it may be a symptom'(233). In the event of any vast social uprising overwhelming an existing power another cohesion would develop from its initial chaos, forgetful of the abstract virtues from which the movement had sprung and incorporate into its constitution many errors latent in the one it usurps. Renan's mankind *en masse* is a slow, if not hopeless, learner.

Leo admonishes his new companion for lumping religion in with politics. But Renan is adamant that 'all religions are political, just as all politics are religious'(235). He explains,

> Christianity with its notion of mankind as a brotherhood, and the Papacy with its notions of a spiritual empire, a suzerainty, over all peoples, have destroyed the ancient conception of the unity of Church and State. The religion of the Greeks was embodied in their laws; and the politics of the Jews, in their religion. The ideal conception of religion as something quite distinct from the State has proved unworkable, if not disastrous. All the churches have had to smite their mystics with the thunders of excommunication, to extinguish the inward light, to restrain the free play of thought. Even the most primitive form of Christianity, the Messianic notion, was purely political. If we are to talk on social questions we cannot separate religion from politics. The distinction between them is artificial: they are merely the opposite poles of a single idea.(235-36)

From all this Leo concludes that the progress of humanity must be a myth if its fate is stagnation, to which Renan concedes that human affairs are unstable, 'wisdom and folly [...] move mysteriously in us, a breath would quicken them into life again'(236-37), Leo's interpretation being that civilisation waxes and wanes between variety and uniformity in endless cycles impelled by a hidden force. This cyclical theory of history has been espoused by several philosophers, historians and poets such as Plato, Polybius, Goethe, Vico and Yeats.

> Renan sees that force emanating from
>
> the poorer and humbler classes of the people, the folk who are of the soil . . . whose life and happiness depends upon the sun

> and rain. It is significant that all the gods were originally agricultural gods, that the history of every nation begins in Eden.(238)

In comparison, the universe of the artisans and town dwellers is machine-like, without intelligence or conscious will, performing simply by force of habit, supplying manufactured articles to satisfy humdrum needs, a stricture from which at times humanity suddenly erupts into a fury of destruction. The middle classes developing from these people conceive socialism, which itself is material and mechanical, whereas the older ideas were spiritual and natural. Renan artfully wishes the socialists would form themselves into monastic communities practising not celibacy but eugenics to produce an aristocratic caste dedicated to the community of goods, surrounded by decadent serfs. A parallel instance is Plato's advocacy of the Guardians in his *Republic*. Eventually they would

> crystallise into an hierarchy, and perish. They would rule as the priests ruled [...] mediaeval Europe. They would resuscitate the double tyranny of the Church and State in one body. The whole progress of the last four hundred years has been toward individual liberty in thought and word. That ideal would be lost.(243)

Leo denounces Renan's gospel as purely destructive since nothing is permanent which crystallises into an hierarchy, or is limited by an institution, and accuses him of denying religion to the masses, substituting instead the perishable glories of the earth. The attitude expressed here is an inversion of that of the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. How then, Leo asks, would Renan restore morality? But Renan counters by defining both curiosity and morality as natural needs, which to him are therefore truths. His constructive policy is to see the all-pervading spirit of progress develop spontaneously as it pushes toward the unknown. A discovery in any branch of science may react upon all, for which reason progress seems always to be a purely destructive force. It is only when the force is channelled into a defined new phase that its constructive value can be gauged.

The two continue in this vein, to include in their sights democracy, Papal Infallibility, anarchism, Biblical studies and the ultimate fate of Christianity. Leo concludes that even Christianity itself seems to be dissolving, while Renan forecasts a new growth resulting from a long period of fallow, 'and the modern spirit will hardly touch it, not only because the new Christianity will be more flexible in itself, but also because the people will have inherited our results without having endured our conflicts'.(265)

The final episode 'Apologia Dei' was added in the 1930 revised edition which deleted the original edition's Preface. These changes shift the thematic emphasis from historical manipulation to philosophical enquiry about the nature and relevance of God in the context of evolving social orders. Although each story illuminates this objective, 'Apologia Dei', God's monologue to Satan, goes some way toward summarising those other contributions. Thus the book's 1930 edition is more clearly integrated than the original version.

The conclusion reached in 'Apologia Dei' is that God is too far from man to be understood by him. God tells Satan:

> you behold that which is eternal, and you behold, also, time, in which are being, and movement, and change, birth and dissolution, these being aspects of time; and time is but a mode of consciousness, though for men it is the only mode. His thought is like a beam of light moving through darkness, to illuminate, first one thing, for an instant, and then another: phantom after phantom evoked from an abyss, into which they fade and vanish again, for they have no more substance than his senses lend them in shaping them to his mind. He has nothing of reality but that instantaneous present, though memory and anticipation may seem to enlarge its field, creating in him the illusion that he is continually approaching more closely to truth, even while his own nature prevents him, and the promise of revelation is never fulfilled.(271)

Manning's book moves from scepticism to scepticism in seeming to aim at some definite assurance. His dialogues are between men living at times of change, when one set of ideals is giving way to another. Thus the King of Uruk is confronted with Adam; the Athenian conservatives with Socrates and his

disciples; Serenus the Epicurean with St Paul, when 'Gallio saw the world and the Empire drifting toward a complete breakdown'(121); Thomas Cromwell and Machiavelli are faced by the Reformation; Pope Leo XIII is confronted with Renan. The one place where the assurance aimed at is suggested as forthcoming, is in the faith of St Francis, his faith being not in dogma but in practicality. Thus the dialogues, each in itself an imaginative and elegant work, form a volume of inquiries into different sets of values, combined with imaginative suggestion of how far they worked.

Parallels with Browning's *Parleyings With Certain People of Importance in Their Day* has been mentioned. Each of the historical figures Browning introduces brings a renewed consideration of art and life, topics which had always interested himself. The collection of 'parleyings' therefore offers a form of indirect autobiography and personal opinions. Just as Browning's beliefs are made known in this way, Manning, through the choice of his subjects, reveals more of his own character. Richard Cody, Manning's perceptive analyst, has drawn an analogy between *Scenes and Portraits* and *The Waste Land*.[11] He sees it anticipating 'in all but neurosis' the 'historical intelligence' of Eliot's work. But while the historic significance in Manning's book is obvious, also at a moral level the book does explore the tension between doubt and belief. His awareness of human suffering, irony and wit, and lack of illusion, approaches an observation of humanity's progress equivalent to that made by Eliot. Moreover while, in any comparison, Eliot's sudden leaps and flourishes overshadow Manning's moderate mood changes, it is reasonable to believe that Eliot remembered and made use of Manning's story of Renan provoking Pope Leo, when he wrote:

> But it seems that something has happened that has never happened before: though we know not just when, or why, or how, or where.
> Men have left GOD, not for other gods, they say, but for no

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[11] Richard Cody, letter to the *TLS*, 9 September 1977, p.1081.

god; and this has never happened before
That men both deny gods and worship gods, professing
First Reason,
And then Money, and Power, and what they call Life, or
Race, or Dialect.
The Church disowned, the tower overthrown, the bells
upturned, what have we to do
But stand with empty hands and palms turned upwards
In an age which advances progressively backwards?[12]

The whole approach to wit and irony goes back to the Socratic method of comparison, illustrated in a Victorian analogue, W.H. Mallock's *The New Republic: or culture, faith and philosophy in an English country house.* That book, which Manning must have known, satirises English society and ideas through its treatment of thinly disguised well known contemporaries. Critical acclaim, but limited popular appeal and commercially modest success, resulted for Manning following the publication of *Scenes and Portraits.* Buoyant however, he cast about for the idea of a novel with which to consolidate his reputation. He chose as its subject-matter a continuation of his reflections on religious life, to be published as *The Golden Coach.* With this decision in 1909 Manning committed himself to a task he was never able to complete, which became the albatross around his neck for the rest of his life.

ii. 1909-: *The Golden Coach* (unfinished)

The conception of this work, the writing of which proved to be so troublesome to Manning, is recorded in a letter to Fairfax:

> I am going to write a romantic, fantastic, quasi-historical long story about a French Cardinal, an abbé, and a boy, who go to the Court of Rome in the seventeenth century. [...] I am only just taking it up as a relaxation [...]. I go on thinking out the

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[12] T S Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, "Choruses from 'The Rock'", pp.177-78.

> problem, but have destroyed what I had already written. [...] A romantic history, a mere amusing commentary upon the time will be a kind of escape for me, a refuge in odd moments.[13]

He continued just as he began, by thinking about the problem for the next twenty-five years, and destroying most of what he wrote. Rather than become a refuge for him in odd moments, the romance became a constant nagging vexation. At first he approached the task light-heartedly:

> At present I am moving about like Gulliver in a Lilliputian world of my own creating. 'T is spread out on the table as I write, and is populated by a host of enchanting little people in seventeenth century costume. Driving over the pleasant landscape, for the last two days, they do not seem to have moved more than three snail's paces from where I met them. I overhear their conversation, and take it down on paper for your amusement when you return: it will I hope be a finished romance by then.[14]

All that is known to survive of the work is four chapters comprising forty-five single-spaced typed sheets. Its opening statement reads:

> Jean-Marie-Adhémar, Archbishop of Velay, having come to the age of sixty-nine was persuaded that he had abandoned the pomp and vanity of this world. In his house in the Faubourg Saint Germain he lived with three of his relations: Madame Chapuys de Sainte-Claire; her daughter, Athalie, who was fifteen years old: and M. Gui de Merville, who supplemented a slender income with the hospitality of His Grandeur, and the hazard of the dice. His Grandeur's chaplain, the Abbé Bigné, also lived with him: he was a short, round, red-faced man, who spent the greater part of the day in the library, and the rest of the time in attendance upon Madame de Sainte-Claire, with whom he played piquet.

The remainder of the composition rounds out those characters, and a few more, and introduces the plot. The Archbishop is seen to take a middle stand politically, the Abbé to possess some erotic tendencies, and Madame de Sainte-Claire to be quietly resourceful. It is clear that the Archbishop will not be left in peaceful retreat from the world, as he is persuaded to attend the Court of Louis XIV where opposing factions, led by two rival cardinals, show great interest in the purpose of his audience. The King charges him to undertake a secret mission to Rome, 'to the Sacred College,

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[13] Fairfax collection, letter No.79, dated 30 May, 1909.

[14] *op.cit.*, No.85, letter dated 5 October, 1909.

rather than to the Pope', the suggestion being that Louis is suspicious of Pope Clement X's intentions toward France. That very promising start is the extent of the four chapters.

Several more references to the work appear in Manning's correspondence with Fairfax and Rothenstein. In time they become progressively apologetic over its likely completion, but perseverant in their tone, the last of them stating:

> I am feeling towards the romance. The work we live by, does'nt live; and the work that lives, we can't live by.[15]

He tells Fairfax that Olivia Shakespear praised the second instalment, while the work 'grows and grows, slowly, but otherwise as I would wish.' He admits that the method is so different from what is customary at present, that he wonders whether anyone will like it when finished, and to having made a good deal of research into the condition of Roman society at that time. Of its opening sequence in France in 1670, he writes that the 'historical basis has been a great bore', the story seeming to 'persist in going backwards', however soon he will be 'piecing Athalie's love story together, and the Italian journey, and that will be more dramatic. Oh I wish it were finished.' A later missive to Fairfax reveals the impasse reached in him:

> I have no head for anything but M. de Velay's journey to Rome. I aint a realist, I am what Miss Austin called an imaginist. Madame de Sainte-Claire has become an obsession. She rules me now as effectively as she ruled His Grandeur years ago: and I can't persuade myself that she has never existed. She exists now. She will read and fold up this letter at once, if I don't, I can almost see her hand coming over my shoulder to take it. One can get away from real people, but imaginary people haunt us more especially when they are female. [...] A vision of black velvet, old lace, and bewitching eyes...[16]

Years earlier, Olivia Shakespear, in complimenting Manning on drafts of his stories which eventuated as *Scenes and Portraits*, told him she thought he

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[15] Rothenstein papers, letter dated 22 December, 1921.

[16] Fairfax collection, No.105, dated 18 June, 1912.

'used the English language as a medium for writing in French.'[17] This would have been heady praise to Manning, an avowed Francophile, and be remembered by him. One more quotation from *The Golden Coach* illustrates his style. The Archbishop reminisces with the Abbé over his former association with a lady, Madame de Sarraute whom, it seems, he is soon to meet again:

> sixteen years of estrangement has made a great difference more especially after we had been so friendly, so intimate. It is difficult to begin again. Some things never die out of the heart, they shut themselves up there, and the world flows over them; but after a time they emerge again. I find myself remembering many trivial things in connection with Beauprès. How we drove to Church with my mother in a coach and four on Sunday; and, after Mass was over, drew up on the green to watch the people at the fair; and how, driving home again, from every half-opened door came the fragrance of cakes baking. I wonder do they still bake such good cakes in Boissy?

This excerpt bears strong affinity with Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* which Manning probably read in its original French edition. The contention here is that as Manning engaged with his romance he saw the work assuming Proustian proportions, a task he found daunting, probably physically more than mentally. Through his unnatural obsession with Madame de Sainte-Claire, whose image represents his love for France or the inspiration in his work, he became increasingly hesitant, and unsure of reaching the pinnacle of effect he desired, and thus failed in his ambition to write a great romance.

iii. 1923: *The Life of Sir William White*

> Popular biographies of historical characters are extremely numerous at present, and while a few may be tolerated for the sake of their purely negative virtues, the greater number are merely pretentious and silly. We do not ask for brilliance and originality in their authors, but only that the intention should be honest, that some pains should have been taken to ascertain

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[17] Fairfax collection, No.28, letter dated 9 June, 1907.

> the facts, and that these should be stated in sober and decent language.[18]

So wrote Manning about biography, some years before he took up the role of biographer himself. Conventions in biographical writing have changed considerably since Manning commenced his own effort in 1920. However even by the standards then prevailing his contribution to the genre, *The Life of Sir William White*, fell below expectations. The end production does faithfully adhere to the definition its author laid down for his *Spectator* readers, but it is a definition lacking in sparkle. It follows therefore that his book will probably lack sparkle, and this is the case. But from what we learn of Sir William White from Manning he too lacked sparkle. This may be an unfair judgment against the hero of many a Whitehall struggle, whose life nevertheless would not seem to have attracted retelling by any of the great biographers of the day, such as Lytton Strachey and Harold Nicolson.

Manning accepted the commission from Lady White to write the biography of her late husband, who had been Director of Naval Construction and Assistant Controller at the Admiralty over a considerable period of time in which he had inaugurated several sweeping changes designed to shake the fleet out of its protracted post-Nelson complacence. In terms of size *The Life of Sir William White* is Manning's most substantial work, amounting to five hundred pages illustrated with a frontispiece photograph of Sir William and several photographic plates. But in reality he found the task of writing the biography almost unbearable for several reasons, and it was generally felt among his friends that the effort was a mistake.

Manning does seem an unlikely candidate for such a project. His writing to that date had followed an aesthetic, discursive style. Probably

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[18] Frederic Manning, 'Richelieu', *The Spectator*, 11 January, 1913, pp.64-65.

he was initially referred to Lady White by connections and pressed into accepting her commission by Arthur Galton whose cousin Sir Douglas Galton had been a friend of the late Sir William as had Henry Newbolt, previously helpful in promoting Manning's interests. However there were other circumstances which both shaped his decision and conspired against his success. The worry of his financial difficulties, allayed by the promise of some ready money accruing from the commission and royalties, must have influenced his acceptance, outweighing any doubts Manning might have felt about the uncharacteristic project, while his health and spirits, even poorer than usual, proved to be as great a hindrance to productivity as those doubts. Also, with the memory of his wartime experiences still fresh in his mind he came to dislike interviewing the militarists, industrialists and entrepreneurs connected with White's world at the Admiralty,[19] to all of whom he apportioned blame for the mass slaughter he had witnessed in France so recently. Perhaps too as time advanced, but his output on the book did not, he came to realize that his subject would not be as commercially attractive as he had anticipated on accepting the commission. Nevertheless despite these obstacles Manning persevered and did produce a book which provides valuable insight into an industry and an aspect of public service which are both unfamiliar to the public.

Literally the work reads like one solitary man's account of the life of another solitary man. Its pervading sense is sadness and isolation. Not that Sir William himself was melancholic, although he did suffer bouts of depression. Only near the end of his energetic and accomplished career was he disappointed, his work being discredited because of one spectacular failure, and that through no direct fault of his own, although he chose to shoulder the blame. But rather the 'solitary' sense emanates from Manning's

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[19] cf. the comment attributed to Stanley Baldwin: 'a lot of hard-faced men who looked as though they had done very well out of the war.'

own circumstances at the time of writing, as much as from the way he portrays White, which is of a figure enveloped in plans, specifications, meetings and inspections, engrossed in his profession, with very little of his private life or his animation surfacing. As though anticipating this criticism himself, Manning writes,

> His [White's] work absorbed his whole life, and any record of his life must be chiefly a record of his work.
>
> In order to keep the book within reasonable limits, a great many of his unofficial activities have been ignored deliberately. [...] A man deserves to be judged principally by the work in which his greatness is most fully revealed, and in Sir William White's case this work was done in the public service. He abandoned a lucrative employment in a private capacity for what he considered to be an obvious public duty; and he was rewarded, as most public servants are rewarded eventually, by the consciousness of his own sacrifice and rectitude.[20]

This justification carries conviction and some value, particularly if applied to, say, a business reference, but when claimed as the basis for a biography with the aim of portraying vivacity in which personality is at least as important as performance in teasing out character, then Manning's plea miscalculates.

White came from a poor Devonshire family inbued with strong Christian principles. He was a bright and industrious student. At fourteen he passed the entrance examination into Devonport Dockyard through which:

> It was singularly fortunate that the Admiralty should have provided him with the means by which not only his brilliant talents, but his will, character, and power of rapid decision found a suitable object and direction. [...] The whole character of the man was admirably fitted to a life of action and conflict. It needed a definite tangible object, the discipline of science and reality.[21]

White's abilities soon attracted the notice of his supervisors. He was recommended for and achieved excellent results in further specialised studies; he steadily gained a reputation for reliabilty and diligence, and

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[20] Frederic Manning, *The Life of Sir William White*, (London: John Murray, 1923). Preface, pp.xi-xii.

[21] *op. cit.*, p.3

quickly advanced into areas of greater responsibility. He was also fortunate in being in the right place, at the right time, the 1860s -

> It was the birth of a new age. Steam propulsion and the use of iron in the place of wood presented an entirely new set of problems for the naval architect to solve, and the future seemed full of brilliant promise. In every direction there were tentative gropings toward further discoveries, and the ferment of science was again modifying rapidly, if imperceptibly, the conditions of human progress and stimulating men with the spirit of adventure. To start at the bottom and work one's way to the top has always been the counsel of perfection which a disinterested experience offers to the innocence of youth; but it is given only to a few fortunate men to start at the beginning of a great movement and continue in it until the revolution has reached its final completion and term. Even rarer are those whose intellectual capacity and breadth of vision enable them to grasp the movement in its whole extent and in its detail. White was not only fortunate in his age, but also in the possession of a mind so perfectly adapted to the requirements of the age.[22]

Manning encourages participation in this ferment of activity by very quickly deluging his readers with copious and detailed accounts of the design, construction and performance of the significant new classes of warships which were considered necessary to satisfy England's concern to retain control of the world's trade routes. He also supplies background to this by recounting numerous diplomatic incidents around the world, in which White became increasingly involved as an able negotiator between the Navy and the politicians. Those affairs are curiosities now, having been long ago swept aside by the magnitude of later events.

In 1875-77, partly as a result of his lecturing at the Royal Naval College, White wrote and published the *Manual of Naval Architecture*, the first significant text book on the subject, which became the standard on which all later such works were based, and he was largely responsible for the formation of the Royal Corps of Naval Constructors. In 1883 he resigned from his position in the public service as Chief Constructor at the Admiralty to

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[22] *op.cit.*, p.7

accept a offer too good to refuse from a private shipbuilding firm in Newcastle. However he was wooed back to the Admiralty two years later with increased status and salary. Only the major events in White's private life are recorded along the way - the death of his mother, his marriage and the births of his children, the death of his wife and his remarriage - and only then juxtaposed with technical data like:

> Mild steel used for shipbuilding ranged between 26 and 32 tons per square inch in ultimate tensile strength, and its elastic limit was at 16 to 17 tons per square inch: the material tested under White's supervision at Landore was high-tensile steel.[23]

A lecture by him at the Mansion House in 1887, arranged by the Shipwrights' Company, was said to 'mark an era in shipbuilding'. He was credited with having 'restored to the ship-of-war the symmetry and beauty of design which had been lost during the transition from sails to steam. The transition vessels were nightmares. That a ship should be sightly was to White an article of faith; and since beauty in all things is the perfect proportion of the means to the end, the principle is sound.' Among many other vessels he designed the *Dreadnought*, the first of the class of that name and the forerunner of the modern battleship.

In 1895, in recognition of his 'signal services to the Navy', White was invested with the Knight Commander of the Bath. He continued the strenuous working routine he had always followed, particularly as developments in warships advanced rapidly, and toured extensively on government business. Then in terms of his world, disaster struck. A new royal yacht, named the *Victoria and Albert*, was successfully launched in May 1899. She was described in an article in *Engineering* as:

> A splendid specimen of naval architecture, with all the beauties of form which have ever characterised Sir William White's models, and with many ingenious devices to secure comfort as well as safety. She has a very fine entry and a sweet run aft, a clipper bow, with a bowsprit about 60 feet long, and a rakish

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[23] *op.cit.*, p.58.

elliptical stern.[24]

After launching, the yacht remained afloat for the next two months while being fitted out and was then dry docked for completion. In January 1900 White was telegrammed with the news that the yacht had heeled over suddenly, and was lying in a precarious position in the dock. As Manning describes White's reaction:

> Though he was able to suppress his feelings for the time, the shock overwhelmed him from the first.[...] when he arrived at two o'clock in the morning at the bleak dock-side and saw the beautiful thing heeled over with the naphtha 'flares' burning all around, a host of men climbing over her and shouting angrily, when he felt the bitterness and hostility in the minds of all concerned, his heart broke, and it was long before he could smile again.
> In the morning the yacht was floated, and he tried an inclining experiment.[25]

He accepted full responsibility for the failure. But investigations showed that a considerable quantity of weighty fittings were added in the upper part of the vessel, 'where the extensive saloons and accommodation for Her Majesty and suite are provided', outside design limits and without his knowledge. In due course even though modifications to the yacht made it thoroughly seaworthy, and a court of inquiry found that the errors were in the system rather than in its officials, White's reputation was permanently damaged. His retirement from the Admiralty in 1902 was a sad anticlimax to a brilliant career. Until his death in 1913 he remained busy in private business, travelling a good deal, particularly in North America, and receiving many accolades.

Of the reviews, Manning's own résumé of them as an experienced reviewer himself, is informative:

> The review in the Times Lit. Supp. was silly, self-contradictory, and perhaps informed by some vindictive feeling against White. It was also ill-written and ignorant. What can

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[24] *op.cit.*, p.408.

[25] *op.cit.*, p.419.

be thought of a reviewer who writes, (and an editor who passes) a sentence like 'Sir William White did most undeniably do a great work as Constructor for the Navy and therefore âlso for us âll.' Oh, my God! If I had written like that as a boy of 12, I should have stood in a corner with a dunce's cap on my head. I am really sorry that the Times Lit. Supp. should have fallen so low. That and the Sunday Times were the only hostile notices: the engineering and shipbuilding in fact all the technical papers gave me even too much praise, and the sales are excellent. Were you not amused by the Times' reviewer's naive suspicion that I was ironical?[26]

He is correct to be pleased with the book's acceptance by the engineering and shipbuilding fraternity. For them, as for the historical and the administrative minded, it contains a wealth of information, but biography is also an exercise in literature. The work heavily favours technical detail at the expense of human interest. His care to give the many eminent people in White's ambit their correct titles and rank imposes a formality on the structure which, with the absence of any characterisation at all, particularly White, from many lengthy passages, detracts from its purpose and reduces the commentary to a report. In this sense the book falls below Manning's own impeccable standards.

iv 1929: *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, edited and republished as *Her Privates We* (1930)

The subject of warfare which is present in all of Manning's long narrative poems and eventually becomes dominant in them is brought forward in *The Middle Parts of Fortune* where, rather than being dominant, war is the medium in which the book exists. The idea for the work seems to have originated in Manning's mind soon after he 'went out' to the Front. While on leave in England before commencing officer training for the second time, he wrote to

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[26] Rothenstein papers, letter dated 21 November, 1923.

William Rothenstein:

> I started on the Somme front, before Guillemont, in the second week of August; and ended on the Ancre, before Serre. Sir Douglas Haig's despatch mentions the 16th and 18th of August, and the 13th of November - briefly - and they give me matter for a life-time. Well, a General takes a scientific and extensive view of effects. Our view is narrow, more detailed, and intensive. He is governed by reasons, and we by instincts. I know which have the stronger reality and determining force in war. For even in this age of mechanical murder, war has not become a science, but remains an art.[27]

This book is both Manning's story and the story of Manning. It is Manning's story because it is the product of all his experience and skill as a writer. It is also the story of Manning because of its autobiographical nature. The principal character, Private Bourne, bears many resemblances to Manning, and while some commentators note the obvious simple difference, that Bourne is killed in battle, they either ignore or play down the significance of this serious allegorical touch. But however much the story is about Manning, the dominant fact is that *The Middle Parts of Fortune* steps outside him. For it portrays - it is no exaggeration to assert - with Shakespearean wit and art, the story of just another soldier going about his business of coping with the moil of all-demanding warfare. Manning confirms this point in a scene depicting the reaction of the rank and file of Bourne's company to an officer's unusual and well meant, but unavailing, condescension, by explaining that every private soldier is,

> a man in arms against a world, a man fighting desperately for himself, and conscious that, in the last resort, he stood alone; for such self-reliance lies at the very heart of comradeship. In so far as Mr Rhys had something of the same character, they respected him; but when he spoke to them of patriotism, sacrifice, and duty, he merely clouded and confused their vision.(149)[28]

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[27] Rothenstein papers, letter dated 2 January, 1917.

[28] Bracketed numbers after quotations refer to page numbers locating those quotations in the text used, *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990) [1929].

Only part of Chapter I and parts of the concluding Chapters XVI to XVIII are devoted to describing the fighting and the killing which result from the accumulated horror of the shocking front line conditions, the *ad hoc* raiding parties sent out across no-man's-land, and the massed frontal attacks ordered by high command on the heavily fortified and entrenched German positions. The bulk of the novel concentrates on the routine experiences of soldiering in warfare, while its rank and file are manoeuvred in the immediate rear of the front line often, it seems to them, at the whim of senior officers, recovering from one major engagement with the enemy and preparing for the next one. In this instance that front line is the Somme and Ancre battlefield of 1916. There Manning served with the British army, and although he alludes to geographical and historical details sufficient only to add poignancy to his story, it is possible, from the places he names, to follow Bourne's movements on a battlefield map. The fighting in Chapter I is located in the major engagement around Trones Wood commencing on 1 July 1916, being part of the general offensive opened that day. While Bourne rests exhausted physically and mentally, immediately after his battalion is relieved from the 'confusion and tumult' of the fighting, scenes of that conflict remain vivid in his mind:

> Suddenly he remembered the dead in Trones Wood, the unburied dead with whom one lived, he might say, cheek by jowl, Briton and Hun impartially confounded, festering, fly-blown corruption, the pasture of rats, blackening in the heat, swollen with distended bellies, or shrivelling away within their mouldering rags; and even when night covered them, one vented in the wind the stench of death. [...] the dead now lying out in all weathers on the downland between Delville Wood, Trones, and Guillemont.(11-13)

The concluding chapters, closing with Bourne's death, take place during another offensive, further north near Serre, in November 1916. In this next excerpt Bourne, with his battalion, is returning to the front line there.

> They were moving in dead silence now, not that the Hun could overhear them; and the interval between the various platoons must have been about one hundred yards. It implied a lively sense of favours to come.[...] they entered the long straight street of Colincamps. [...] There was not an undamaged house left, and some of the mud-built barns were collapsing, as an

> effect of repeated explosions in their neighbourhood. [...] The street ended, and the houses with it, on meeting a road linking it with Mailly-Maillet on the right, and on the left continuing to the sugar refinery, where it joined the main road from Mailly-Maillet to Serre.[...] From that point the road, so long as it was on the slope of the hill, would be visible from the enemy lines.(168-69)

The interval between those two scenes, and time extending a little beyond the second of them, describe in detail the wide range of a private soldier's abruptly changing circumstances and his reactions to them. As Bourne says when he witnesses wastage and death resulting from the observance of military protocol, 'The war might be a damned sight more tolerable if it weren't for the bloody army'(95); and later, 'It seems to be the principle of the army, to find out something you can't do, and make you do it.'(123)

The form of language Manning adopts to suit his changing purposes have been the cause of comment, sometimes aggressive, among his critics and readers. The most serious consequence was that his original text had to be bowdlerised in 1929 in order to satisfy the standards of publication which then applied, thus resulting in the revised version, *Her Private We*, being published in 1930. Nowadays coarse language in writing is so frequent that whatever impact is intended by it is negligible. But not so in *The Middle Parts of Fortune* where Manning's swearing still has the power to shock. This happens because, not only are the crude invectives and oaths uttered by his soldiers authentic in tone and appropriate to the circumstances, but they also jar against his magnificent prose. The resulting deliberate contrast increases their impact while retaining their spontaneity. Manning's analysis of William Blake's lyricism and the innovative nature of it, discussed in Chapter 3, has its application here. The 'revolt against metre' identified there in Blake's poetry is evident here in Manning's lyrical prose where he breaks a somewhat even flowing narrative with these disruptive outbursts to introduce to the reader's ear 'free rhythms of music.' Foreigners often accuse Australians of being inveterate swearers. Manning encourages this

claim himself:

> 'You're learnin' a lot o' bad words from us 'ns,' said Martlow, grinning.
> 'Oh, you all swear like so many Eton boys,' replied Bourne, indifferently. 'Have you ever heard an Aussie swear?'
> 'No, 'n' I don't want,' said Martlow. 'Them buggers 'ave too much spare cash to know what soldierin' means.'(164)

Musically the swearing may approach *sforzando* but hardly *maestoso*; its broken rhythm adds vigour to Manning's literary construction. Manning reveals his Australian origin in several other places, from similar involuntary allusions.[29]

Comradeship among these men is an important support to their endurance and to their hope of survival. Bourne strikes up a companionship with Shem and Martlow, two other privates in his infantry company. Their initial meeting is fortuitous but soon a bond develops between them although their ages and backgrounds diverge. Both Shem and Martlow, although Martlow more so, come from poor working class families and have only elementary schooling. Bourne however, 'had a text of Horace with Conington's translation in his pocket'(56), as would be expected of Manning in the same circumstances. Horace is a pertinent reading choice here because in his satire he combined perceptive realism with the irony of the satirist being mocked together with his intended victims. In due course Horace's satirical model will be shown almost to epitomise Manning's plan in writing *The Middle Parts of Fortune*.

Of their comparative ages, the indications are that Bourne is Manning's age, about thirty-four; Shem may be about twenty and despite his youth is described as an 'astute counsellor'(28), 'quick witted', 'a tough, sturdy and generous person'(40), while Martlow, merely sixteen years old (28), is emotional, 'everybody's friend; and being full of pluck, cheekiness, and

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[29] Other, inadvertent, references to Manning's Australian origin appear at pages 8, 13, 54, 188 and 191.

gaiety, he made his way very cheerfully in a somewhat hazardous world.'(20) Shem and, particularly, Bourne become experts in acquiring for their own use whatever they can to make their conditions more comfortable. Early on, Corporal Tozer recognises this:

> 'You two are the champion bloody scroungers in the battalion,' he said; and it was impossible to know whether he were more moved by admiration or by disgust. Shem, whose eyes were like the fish-pools of Heshbon, turned on him an expression of mingled innocence and apprehension; but Bourne only looked on indifferently [...].(14)

The numerous experiences they share include clubbing together, mostly under Bourne's initiative, to buy from shops and villagers near their billets, choice wine and a change of food for 'a bon time' in off-duty hours, their clandestine feasts being a much prized relief from dull army rations and routine. In preparing for one of these treats (102), aspects of their respective characters are revealed. Martlow offers to buy all the goods. He has 'about three weeks' pay, an' me mother sent me a ten-bob note. I wish she wouldn't send me any money, as she wants all she gets, but there's no stoppin' 'er.' Bourne, the organiser, in suggesting Shem should pay for the drinks, alludes to Shem's traditional Jewish reputation:

> 'He never will pay unless you make him. He wouldn't think it prudent. But all the same, if you are broke to the wide, Shem will come down quite handsome; he doesn't mind making a big splash then, as it looks like a justification of his past thrift. Shem and I understand each other pretty well, only he thinks I'm a bloody fool.'

Shem retorts indulgently, 'I don't think you're a bloody fool, but I think I could make a great deal more use of your brains than you do.' To this Bourne adds,

> 'Shem thinks he is a practical man, [...] and a cynic, and a materialist; and would you believe it, Martlow, he had a cushy job in the Pay Office, to which all his racial talent gave him every claim, and he was wearing khaki, and he had learnt how to present arms with a fountain-pen; the most perfect funk-hole in Blighty, and he chucks the whole bloody show to come soldiering!'

Many of these occasions, especially among the NCOs, are heavy drinking sprees, to which Bourne is often invited because of his conviviality and

discretion. He develops a reputation for being able to outstay even the most intemperate of them while still keeping a clear head and seeing them back safely in their quarters.

The association formed by these three disparate characters is structurally important to the story through the range of situations their presence generates. One such situation arises just after their relief from the first of the Somme fighting. They are luxuriating in the novelty of bathing in a secluded river near their billet, unaware it is out of bounds to them, when they are accosted by a military policeman.(48-49) He

> rapped out an adjectival comment on their personal characters, antecedents, and future prospects, which left nothing for the imagination to complete. As they showed an admirable restraint under the point and emphasis of his remarks, he contented himself with heading them back to billets, with a warning that the village was out of bounds, and then took his own way along the forbidden road in search of pleasure, like a man privileged above his kind.

Shem and Martlow are outraged at the injustice of this treatment:

> 'They don't care a fuck 'ow us'ns live,' said little Martlow bitterly. 'We're just 'umped an' bumped an' buggered about all over fuckin' France, while them as made the war sit at 'ome waggin' their bloody chins, an' sayin' what they'd 'ave done if they was twenty years younger. Wish to Christ they was, an' us'ns might get some leaf an' go 'ome an' see our own folk once in a while.'
>
> 'Too bloody true,' Shem agreed. 'Five bloody weeks on the Somme without a bath, and thirteen men to a loaf; and when they take you back for a rest you can't wash your feet in a river, or go into a village to buy bread. They like rubbing it in all right.'

Bourne placates them by pointing out they have enjoyed a free bathe and should be able to 'take an ordinary telling off without starting to grouse about it.' Discussions, sometimes heated, between themselves and also with others help reveal facets of the soldiers' thoughts. For example, various comments by the NCOs and other ranks on the state of the war lead to angry outbursts against opinions held at home by civilian profiteers, warmongers, pacificists and the gullible public. Also the men's acute assessment of leadership and the unrealistic expectations their leaders impose on them to

perform at maximum effectiveness erupts in them as frustration. During these debates Bourne is often a mediator among the most vocal. His dispassionate reasoning balances their resentment, cooling their fervour and ultimately relieving their antagonism by bringing to the surface their trained response to discipline.

In due course Bourne, Shem and Martlow return with their battalion to the front line for, what proves to be for the three of them, their last dealings with the war. After a night march 'in fighting order' they arrive late at temporary billets nearer to the support line, where they are glad to rest and Bourne marvels over the phenomenon of mateship:

> They laid themselves down, as they were to get a few hours' sleep; and Bourne, dropping off between the two of them, wondered what was the spiritual thing in them which lived and seemed even to grow stronger, in the midst of beastliness.(141)

But their little band will soon disintegrate. Shortly afterwards, in other billets, Bourne encounters 'a couple of men in the twilit street':

> 'Good night, chum,' they called out to him, softly.
> 'Good night.'
> And they were gone again, the unknown shadows, gone almost as quickly and as inconspicuously as bats into the dusk; and they would all go like that ultimately, as they were gathering to go now, migrants with no abiding place, whirled up on the wind of some irresistible impulse. What would be left of them soon would be no more than a little flitting memory in some twilit mind.(195)

In the first of two ensuing engagements Martlow is killed under the circumstances already described in Chapter 2, while Shem is reported wounded and carried to a casualty station, after which nothing more is heard of him. Bourne is killed later in a minor skirmish.

The officers under whom they serve are broady divided into two categories, the staff officers derogatorily called 'brass hats' and the officers in the field. The ranks have little regard for officers collectively, their respect being reserved for those who exhibit leadership and fortitude. On an occasion of the battalion being paraded,

> five minutes later the commanding officer and the adjutant rode down the line of men; perhaps less with the object of making a cursory inspection, than for the purpose of advertising the fact, that they had both been awarded the Military Cross for their services on the Somme.
> 'Wonder they 'ave the front to put 'em up,' said Martlow, unimpressed.
> Major Shadwell and Captain Malet had no distinctions.(97)

Bourne can find the generosity to defend staff officers against the level of ridicule they attract, but not always. There is an incident in which he bristles at the discriminatory treatment against him in an Expeditionary Force Canteen funded by the public to provide the men with comforts. He is refused service on the ruling that the establishment serves officers, and is told he 'can get cocoa and biscuits round the back.'

> Bourne strode out of the shop in such a blind rage that he bumped into one of the lords of creation in the doorway, and didn't stop to apologize. He described him afterwards, while his temper was still hot, as 'some bloody officer got up to look like Vesta Tilley'; and it was a fair comparison, except in so far as the lady was concerned.(189)[30]

An exceptional piece of writing, demonstrating Manning's sense of theatre, describes an incident during which the brigade is put through a manoeuvre devised by the staff officers as preparation for the attack on Serre. The attack zone is reproduced in several fields well behind the front line, with the various sectors and trenches marked out on the ground with tapes. The men can see that the plan is meant to supply them with a kind of map, on the scale of the locality they are to attack, but

> they rapidly became aware of the unreality of it all. The files of men moved forward slowly, and, when they reached the tapes, followed the paths assigned to them with an admirable precision. Their formations were not broken up or depleted by any hostile barrage, the ground was not pitted by craters, their advance was not impeded by any uncut wire. Everything went according to plan. It was a triumph of Staff-work, and these patient, rather unimaginative men tried to fathom the meaning of it all, with an anxiety which only made them more perplexed. They felt there was something incomplete about it. What they really needed was a map of the strange country through which their minds would

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[30] Vesta Tilley (1864-1952) was the stage name of Matilda Alice Powles, later Lady de Frece, a music hall entertainer who was a celebrated male impersonator. Her most popular performance was 'Burlington Bertie'.

> travel on the day, with fear darkening earth and filling it with slaughter.(164-65)

This is an occasion when Bourne finds the actions of the staff officers indefensible; he ridicules their aloofness, their inflexibility and impracticality, and the army's resort to the chain of command process. During this exercise Bourne, Shem and Martlow find themselves, as temporary signallers, attached to brigade headquarters attending close behind their colonel. A 'superb individual' gallops up, then several other 'important people on horseback, even the most important of them all, on a grey, arrived and grouped themselves impressively, as though for a portrait.' After some inconsequential interrogation of the colonel by 'god-like Agamemnon, with a supercilious coldness' they all, including 'the Olympian masters of their fate', move forward, when suddenly there is a diversion. The tapes pass diagonally across a patch of sown clover near a cottage little more than a hovel by which three cows are tethered. 'This was the track taken by a platoon of A Company under Mr Sothern; and as the first few men were crossing the clover, the door of the hovel was flung open, and an infuriated woman appeared', vigorously protesting her proprietorship.

> '*Ces champs sont à moi*!' she screamed, and this was the prelude to a withering fire of invective, which promised to be inexhaustible. It gave a slight tinge of reality to operations which were degenerating into a series of co-ordinated drill movements. The men of destiny looked at her, and then at one another. It was a contingency which had not been foreseen by the Staff, whose intention had been to represent, under ideal conditions, an attack on the village of Serre, several miles away, where this particular lady did not live.(165-66)

Her 'perfect genius for vituperation' stops that element of the advance in its tracks, until the word is given:

> 'Send someone to speak to that woman,' said the Divisional General to a Brigadier; and the Brigadier passed on the order to the Colonel, and the Colonel to the Adjutant, and the Adjutant to Mr Sothern, who, remembering that Bourne had once interpreted his wishes to an old lady in Méaulte when he wanted a broom, now thrust him into the forefront of the battle. That is what is called, in the British Army, the chain of responsibility, which means that all responsibility for the errors of their superior officers, is borne eventually by private soldiers in the ranks.(166)

Bourne, desperately grave before this assemblage, and being fully aware that the woman's meagre livelihood is at risk, through the trampling of fodder for her cattle, manages to pacify her. He suggests Mr Sothern should bypass that particular taped section of their battle map and reassemble his platoon on the other side of her property. This done, 'the General, with all his splendid satellites, moved discreetly away to another part of the field.'

The officers commanding Bourne's company take an interest in him as potential officer material. Bourne equates with Manning in this respect also for, as has been mentioned in the Biographical Notes, Manning himself on two separate occasions following the recommendations of his battalion officers, had entered upon officer training courses from the ranks and on the second attempt had been commissioned. That experience was a failure. At first Bourne resists these approaches (90-91). His explanation is that on enlistment he had been advised by his adjutant to apply for a commission but had declined because he had absolutely no experience of men, not even the kind of experience that a public-school boy gets from being in a large community. He believed, at that time, it would be better for him to gain some experience of men and of soldiering first and then apply, with which reasoning the adjutant had agreed. Now he sees he was wrong. From his experience in the ranks he feels he has taken on the colour of the ranks and believes it would be difficult for him to look at war or to consider the men from the point of view which an officer is bound to take. His present company commander is dismissive of that attitude and urges Bourne's immediate reconsideration, but gives grudging approval to Bourne's request to defer his decision until after the company's participation in 'another show', confidently expected to take place soon. Continued pressure by other officers and the chaplain influences Bourne to yield to their urging, his change of mind mainly resulting from his speculation that if he stays in the ranks he will become a 'slacker', a misgiving he expects to fall hard upon

the heels of the self-respect lost in shirking his responsibility. Yet he remains adamant that first he must take part in that next offensive. All of this sounds like Manning's attempt to rewrite some of his own history. Bourne's imminent departure from their society draws contrasting reactions from Martlow and Shem. On hearing the news Martlow regards Bourne with 'the round eyes of astonishment'. Bourne 'was a reticent and undemonstrative man', but 'he put his arm round Martlow's neck, his arm resting on his shoulder.' He tells Martlow he does not want to go, but he has to, and Martlow responds: "'We're all right as we are, the three of us, aren't we?' said Martlow, with a curious bitterness like anger. 'That's the worst o' the bloody army: as soon as you get a bit pally with a chap summat 'appens.'" (131-33) Shem, however, is not surprised. "'I thought you would go sooner or later,' he said in a matter-of-fact way."(182)

In the 'Author's Prefatory Note' Manning is at pains to claim that his characters are fictitious, that he has drawn no portraits, and his concern has been mainly with the anonymous ranks. However it is difficult to accept this contention in total. The numerous characters he has drawn from the officers, NCOs and the ranks are all memorable because, however briefly in some cases they figure in the story, they all contribute to its substance through the strength of their individuality. They all live. One is not entitled to contradict Manning's stand that they are fictitious, even on the grounds of their vividness. Certainly they are drawn heavily from the anonymous ranks. They may be composite or imaginary, but 'the voices of ghosts' he 'seemed at times to hear' while writing this book, are those of real men. Rather, the ranks may be anonymous but the men are not. He turns anonymity into an art form. The characterisations of Lance-Corporal Miller and of Private Weeper Smart are representative. They are just two of Manning's many successful *dramatis personae*.

Miller is a convicted deserter adept at giving his keepers the slip. His entry into the narrative is early and his final mention only just precedes that of Bourne's last appearance. Gossip brands him a defector to the Germans, or a German spy, or possibly even, Bourne surmises, an English spy. The expectation following his first arrest is that he will be executed by a firing-party which prospect, in the opinion of the men, is fully warranted, except that none of them, Bourne included, wish to be his executioner. Bourne soliloquises that immediately before a battle he has observed in men many grades of anguish between fear and cowardice which they have mastered in various ways. The men's charge against Miller, as he is placed under open arrest among them, is that it is they, not authority, whom he deserted; that his presence is a nuisance to them as their 'riddling conscience' asks questions about him, while he carries with him 'the contagion of fear'. His death sentence is commuted to twenty years' imprisonment, Corporal Marshall tells Bourne, after 'Captain Malet an' the chaplain worked tooth an' nail to get him off', which implies to Bourne 'that there were some extenuating circumstances.'(122-23) But his prison term will be deferred until the war ends when, as Bourne sees the matter, he will be granted a reprieve under a general amnesty. Thus the absurdity of the legal procedure followed by the spectacle of his parade, company by company before the battalion, raises in Bourne 'a strange emotion [...] which was not pity, but a revulsion from this degradation of a man, who was now only an abject outcast.' What would otherwise have been a tragedy, 'but for the act of unspeakable humiliation which they had just witnessed, became a farce.'(167-68) Miller's continued presence remains an embarrassment to the men and to the NCOs whose responsibility he becomes. In a bizarre sequence of events he escapes, is recaptured, escapes again and is again recaptured.

Weeper Smart represents another aspect of soldiering. His grotesque appearance and utterly miserable disposition mark him as an outsider among

the rest. Therefore it is with soldierly pertinence that they name him Weeper because:

> It was inevitable that men, living day by day with such a spectacle of woe, should learn in self-defence to deride it; and it was this sheer necessity which had impelled some cruel wit of the camp to fling at him the name of Weeper, and make that forlorn and cadaverous figure the butt of an endless jest.(145)

The impudent Martlow 'who had been brought up to read people's characters, said of him that he would be just as bloody miserable in peace time'(194) and labels Smart 'ol' tear-gas'.(153, 170) K.M.H. Haq offers an extraordinary interpretation of Weeper Smart, reminiscent of his reading of Fortunatus in *The Vigil of Brunhild.* He writes,

> Weeper Smart is introduced in Chapter XII by the author himself, not Bourne. Perhaps he was conceived rather late, or else why should someone in Bourne's company be kept out of our sight so long and then brought in to play a rather important role? Weeper's connection with Bourne's fate is made with a few simple strokes. He is built up as a person whom one can trust instinctively.[31]

In fact, although Weeper Smart makes his appearance at page 145 in a total of 247 pages, he subsequently appears, quite significantly, at least thirty times in character-rounding situations which gradually reveal his personality, before he finally performs the heroic enactment at Bourne's death which vindicates him as a character and the preparation Manning puts into his conception. His entry is made with strong dramatic effect and his 'connection with Bourne's fate' is constructed out of many more than 'a few simple strokes.' Manning never committed anything to paper in a few simple strokes. The expression may be meant as a complimentary way of acknowledging Manning's skill in compression, a very different thing. But there is no evidence to support this. Otherwise Haq's suggestion of loose application in Manning's 'rather late' conception of Smart in 'a few simple strokes', inferring a casual attitude by Manning to his craft, is certainly wrong. Haq misses the point of Manning's reticence, conciseness and timing which is,

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[31] K M H Haq, 'Frederic Manning: A Critical and Biographical Study', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 1981), p.249.

that he is a perfectionist, he is a poet who measures every word, and that he is also, at heart, a dramatist.

Smart directs his resentment at Bourne in particular, which prompts Bourne to ask Shem and Martlow for a reason to it. Martlow believes it is ''cause you never take any notice of 'im when 'e starts grousin' at you.' Shem agrees and adds that he is a bit sorry for Weeper who is a very good soldier 'up the line.' He has no friends and he is so miserable he never will have any. Shem adds, 'You see, Bourne, you make friends with everybody, whether he's a cook, or a shoemaker, or a sergeant-major, or only Martlow and myself. Until you came along, well, I mucked in all right with the others, but I didn't have any particular chum, so I know what it feels -.' Shem's intimacy is cut short by a salvo of shells exploding uncomfortably near them. Their scramble for cover is probably opportune in another way because it stops the discussion from leading to an encroachment on Bourne's privacy, from which Manning also, in his juxtaposition with Bourne, recoils involuntarily.(170)

The climactic event of the book, richly ironic, is a raid on the enemy trenches. Although the raiding party is drawn from volunteers, Bourne is approached by Captain Marsden to take part, in a way that makes his refusal untenable. The captain has always shown discomfort in conversing with Bourne as a ranker. On this occasion he is further irritated in being reminded by others present of Bourne's impending release for officer training and therefore justifiable exemption from this risky assault. Bourne overcomes his initial hesitation to reconcile himself with the possible consequences, but those around him have misgivings, the chief among them being Weeper Smart. All that is noblest in Smart rises to the occasion:

> 'I am quite ready, sir,' said Bourne, with equal coldness. There was silence for a couple of seconds; and suddenly Weeper stood up, the telephone receiver still on his head, and his eyes almost starting from their sockets.

> 'If tha go'st, a'm goin',' he said, solemnly.
> Captain Marsden looked at him with a supercilious amazement.
> 'I don't know whether your duties will allow of you going,' he said. 'I shall put your name down provisionally.'

Alone together before leaving on the raid, Bourne and Smart converse, with Smart finally unburdening his feelings to Bourne:

> 'What 'opes 'ave us poor buggers got!' exclaimed Weeper.
> 'Why did you come, Smart? I thought it awfully decent of you,' said Bourne.
> 'When I seed that fuckin' slave-driver look at 'ee, a said to mysen, A'm comin'. A'll always say this for thee, tha'lt share all th'ast got wi' us'ns, an tha' don't call a man by any foolish nicknames. A'm comin'.

Bourne makes some attempt to rehabilitate Captain Marsden in Weeper's estimate:

> 'I don't suppose Captain Marsden meant to put things that way, you know, Smart. It's just his manner. He would always do what he thought was right.'
> Weeper turned on him a fierce but pitying glance.
> 'Th'art a bloody fool,' was all he said.
> It was enough. Bourne laughed softly to himself. He had always felt some instinctive antipathy against his company-commander.(240-43)

The descriptions of Miller and Smart are taken a step further. It follows from Bourne's enquiring nature that in seeing both of them as outcasts he should wish to compare them, for each openly expresses in his own way a great horror and dread of war, the difference between them being a matter of endurance. Bourne almost decides that it is Smart's imagination which explains his weakness. Then it occurs to him that while Smart's imagination tortures him it is actually his strength, and it is his imagination, not his will, which keeps him going. Manning does not know whether the tenacity of others who complain should be attributed to will, however he is sure they have more will than Smart, but less imagination. He wonders whether Miller's emotional instability is not far short of madness. Perhaps he is not a coward at all but is, rather, easily influenced by suggestion, devoid of will, facile and therefore more easily lured into spying, as was first thought. Then, suddenly, while amusing himself with the

puzzle of Miller's character, Bourne finds himself probing anxiously into his own. He quickly dismisses these thoughts, for:

> As soon as one touched the fringe of the mystery which is oneself, too many unknown possibilities confronted one, everything seemed insecure and unstable. He turned away from it, with a restless impatience.(194)

'Mystery', the key word in this statement, appears in the text when attempts are made to explain the morality of war, both as an entity in itself and when it is the business of humanity. It is used when Bourne, the protagonist in this depiction of war, is under scrutiny, and even pervades the landscape in which these men move:

> The trenches by day were as forlorn and desolate as by night, but without the enveloping mystery. Everything was stark, bare, and cold; one crept within the skeleton ribs of earth.(241)

Or when news filters through to the men that they are about to return to the trenches, their initial excitement, fed with relief from boredom and uncertainty, subsides into 'a quieter but continuous murmur and movement, like the singing of tense strings.' Outwardly they show bravado but inwardly they conceal their anxiety:

> The passion of their minds threw an unreal glamour over everything, making day, and earth, and the sordid villages in which they herded, seem brief and unsubstantial, as though men held within themselves the mystery which makes everything mysterious.(188)

The 'Author's Prefatory Note' includes an enigmatic definition of war which critics like to quote. 'Mystery' in this context is re-stated as a problem:

> War is waged by men; not by beasts, or by gods. It is a peculiarly human activity. To call it a crime against mankind is to miss at least half its significance; it is also the punishment of a crime.[32] That raises a moral question, the kind of problem with which the present age is disinclined to deal. Perhaps some future attempt to provide a solution for it may prove to be even more astonishing than the last.

Although Manning leaves the 'moral question' unanswered in his 'Prefatory

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[32] cf, Jack Lively, *The Works of Joseph de Maistre*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1965).

Note' the story following the Note is an exposition on crime and punishment in relation to war. When the men return to the line and their hardships increase, they grumble less. They are quieter and withdraw more into themselves. It seems that once back in the front line they lose a great deal of their individuality; they work better, the work seeming to take some of the strain off their minds, in particular the strain of waiting. Actually, although there seems little to distinguish between them, each man within himself becomes conscious of his own personality defined sharply against those around him who are generalised as 'the others':

> The mystery of his own being increased for him enormously; and he had to explore that doubtful darkness alone [...]. If a man could not be certain of himself, he could be certain of nothing. The problem which confronted them all equally, though some were unable or unwilling to define it, did not concern death so much as the affirmation of their own will in the face of death; and once the nature of the problem was clearly stated, they realized that its solution was continuous, and could never be final. Death set a limit to the continuance of one factor in the problem, and peace to that of another; but neither of them really affected the nature of the problem itself.(184)

Location and circumstances can contribute to the processes of moralising and reasoning. When Manning's writing is most reflective he chooses scenes which not only encourage thoughtfulness but which also influence the subject matter of those thoughts. Two scenes, among many equally suitable, are quoted to illustrate that point and provide examples from the 'peculiarly human activity' of war which deny any virtue in its morality while at the same time they discredit humanity's militaristic prejudice. During Bourne's battalion manoeuvres a couple of days after its relief from the front line, Bourne numbers among fifty or more others crammed into a railway van which normally might be expected to hold no more than forty. Their journey is very uncomfortable although Bourne, exercising his usual ingeniousness, is able to seat himself in the doorway, cooled by fresh air, with his feet on the footboard outside while the others feel stifled, are unable to sit, and fall about and jostle one another as the train sways

and jolts on its way. As a result a 'kind of impersonal bad temper, which could not find any very definite object, developed among them; there was some abuse, there were even threats and counter-threats, but no actual quarrelling.' This reaction, after their very recent release from the fighting which had 'transfigured all the circumstances of their life' and 'could only be expressed in the terms of heroic tragedy', Bourne links with their present condition of 'mere derelicts in a wrecked and dilapidated world, with sore and angry nerves sharpening their tempers, or shutting them up in a morose and sullen humour.' From these observations Bourne remembers other times when, studying his companions, he wondered 'how far what he felt himself was similar or equivalent to what they felt', and from that he postulates:

> It is a little curious to reflect that while each man is a mystery to himself, he is an open book to others; the reason being, perhaps, that he sees in himself the perplexities and torment of the mental processes out of which action issues, and they see in him only the simple and indivisible act itself.(38-39)

Another scene lending itself to more moralising reveals the battalion just withdrawn to the support line after a few days in the trenches and preparatory to its next major offensive. Still well within range of enemy shelling, the men must move cautiously, taking care not to congregate for meals, their food being brought to them in dixies and tea-buckets, at scattered places. Bourne, Shem and Martlow see, some little distance from them, the men of a Scots battalion which is brigaded with them, lined up with their mess tins, waiting for breakfast. They hear a shell coming and, as they dive for cover, a terrific explosion followed by two more. One of the shells falls among the Scots, inflicting severe casualties. Martlow's slow, pitiful whisper, 'Them poor, bloody Jocks', typifies the feelings of the men around Bourne, shocked and angered by the needless carnage. They resent the thought of the Scots', and by an extension of the circumstances their own, lives being sacrificed wantonly, through stupidity or mere incompetence. The

knowledge that their lives are at the disposal of an inscrutable power, to be used for its own ends, while being indifferent to them as individuals is, to their minds, iniquitous. Manning knows,

> It was not much use telling them that war was only the ultimate problem of all human life stated barely, and pressing for an immediate solution.

The men recognise intuitively that warfare will continue so long as there remain in humanity the industrialists and financiers imbued with the evils of self-conceit and self-aggrandisement, which ultimately lead to conflict. Later generations will be called upon, like their own, to resolve, by fighting, the enmity caused by pride and greed between power factions. Yet they will agree to do so because they too are vain, and again like that present generation, will become the victims of war, for 'war is a jealous god, destroying ruthlessly his rivals'(204):

> There was no man of them unaware of the mystery which encompassed him, for he was a part of it; he could neither separate himself entirely from it, nor identify himself with it completely. A man might rave against war; but war, from among its myriad faces, could always turn towards him one, which was his own. All this resentment against officers, against authority, meant very little, even to the men themselves. It fell away from them in words.(182)

Revealed here a fundamental difference between Manning and Wilfred Owen contained within a broad agreement. This irregularity is noticed when the question is asked - in Manning's acceptance of the inevitability of war, does he include some motivation to defend what one loves against those who would destroy it? In Owen's poem 'Exposure', he expresses concern (interpretable as ironic) that home and spiritual values be preserved, that God has provided them, and that therefore they must be preserved:

> Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;
> Nor ever suns smile true on child, or field, or fruit.

The ironic interpretation originates from Owen's realisation of his own and the generally held mistaken belief that war was moral and was therefore committed to moral objectives, but was later seen to be immoral and therefore

answerable to the wrath of God in the form of hostile nature. Just prior to the war Owen had been the lay assistant to an Anglican vicar in Oxfordshire. His Christian influences were more orthodox than were Manning's which derived from the strong, even bitter, atmosphere of scepticism in Galton's vicarage. Thus Owen's faith in God is firm. As shown earlier here, Manning, in his poems 'The Sign', 'Wind', 'Bois De Mametz' and 'Leaves', recognises, like Owen, the withdrawal of nature's bounty as a reprisal against war, but their attribution is at least as much toward pagan gods as to the Christian deity, and nowhere in Manning's war literature does he consider 'kind fires' and 'child' equivalents. As his account of the war continues he has Bourne observe hope in the men around him harden toward faith in themselves and in each other, without any feelings beyond that. An explanation of his attitude to faith will be given in the Conclusion.

Bourne himself is a mystery to his associates. Even when he is his most sociable his reserve is conspicuous. But his reticence is almost celebrated in the last scene of all when Weeper Smart picks up the mortally wounded Bourne in no-man's-land, as they return from the raid in which they 'volunteered' to share, and carries him back dead to their own trenches.

> 'A've brought 'im back,' he cried desperately, and collapsed with the body on the duck-boards. Picking himself up again, he told his story incoherently, mixed with raving curses.(247)

Sergeant-Major Tozer lays a consolatory hand on Weeper's shoulder and directs him to 'get some 'ot tea and rum, ol' man. That'll do you good.' Tozer looks at the unpleasant sight of the body propped against the trench wall. He is stoic in his 'quiet fatalism' and moves away

> with a quiet acceptance of the fact. It was finished. He was sorry about Bourne, he thought, more sorry than he could say. He was a queer chap, he said to himself, as he felt for the dug-out steps. There was a bit of a mystery about him; but then, when you come to think of it, there's a bit of a mystery about all of us.(247)

Tozer's final thought in singling out Bourne then quickly including him among them all, supports the concept of Bourne as just another soldier going about

his business. Simply stated, Bourne represents the rank and file soldier, admittedly a highly articulate one, but then so is his omniscient narrator. Tozer's acceptance of Bourne's death repeats his fatalistic response to the death of Mr Clinton in the *de contemptu mundi* excerpt discussed earlier. However there is another interpretation of Tozer's musing applicable to Manning's overall intention. Here the situation may be seen as two-edged by also mocking the plight of a leading actor's curtain call at the conclusion of a play when quickly upstaged by the rest of the cast pressing forward to share the limelight. Hence, like Keats at the end, undervaluing himself in having 'always made an awkward bow',[33] Bourne is relegated into ordinariness; he is denied his own moment of applause, and his individuality, by being merged among his fellows. The question arises, does Tozer's reaction provide a further illustration of Manning's self-effacement, supplied in this instance through Bourne, his alter ego? Yes it does, but only in passing. Often there are reminders of Manning in Bourne, but this story is much more than a vehicle for Manning's self-indulgence. A novel's integrity, its accurate depiction of life, depends upon the author's sincerity, the lack of misdirected motivation, and in both of these matters *The Middle Parts of Fortune* and Manning are exemplary. Whatever of himself goes into Bourne does not divert his readers' attention from that protagonist's strength, but rather adds to Bourne's distinction as a retiring questioner who prefers to be 'a bit of a mystery.'

The book is, in its form, an episode, because of its capacity to be seen as part of an experience within a longer, unwritten, narrative. The evidence for this reading is plentiful. Although the time span is limited to a few specific months of 1916, and the story is written around events in those months, the action is integral with a whole range of matters arising

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[33] John Keats's last known letter, written to Charles Brown, 30 November, 1820.

from hostilities along the Western Front throughout the duration of World War I, from August 1914 to November 1918. Before Trones Wood there had been many battles similar to it. In the interval up to Serre there are others raging, and after Serre there will be many more. But the book's purpose is not solely defined by its being a description of one period in a continuous and unchanging struggle. Its characters, through their various personalities, their conduct and their fate, represent the mixture of transience and stability which constitutes the uncertainty of life under those conditions. After each battle a roll-call is taken of the survivors who, in an accounting for the absentees, are asked for eye-witness verification of what happened. Eventually replacements are brought up to fill the gaps left, and refill them after more battles as events repeat themselves. For various reasons a small number of the original complement will escape injury and or death. Shem, repatriated back to 'Blighty', will survive the war as will, one may believe, Sergeant-Major Tozer as the embodiment of soldiering, Weeper Smart through his innate persistence, Miller through his gift of evasion, and Captain Marsden as a careful manoeuvrer.

Structurally the episode is theatrical, its opening and closing scenes being almost literally first and final curtain performances, with an army blanket providing the curtain. It opens with Bourne, having dropped behind the rest of his force, stumbling back alone to his own trenches, 'beaten to the wide', after taking part in an attack on the enemy. Back in the trenches he comes to a dug-out and

> groped his way down, feeling for the steps with his feet; a piece of Wilson canvas, hung across the passage but twisted aside, rasped his cheek; and a few steps lower his face was enveloped suddenly in the musty folds of a blanket.(1)

On thrusting the blanket aside he sees that the dug-out is vacant and after a brief rest there he presses on to another dug-out which is occupied by the men of his company. On his entry

> all the drawn, pitiless faces turned to see who it was as he

> entered, and after that flicker of interest relapsed into apathy and stupor again. The air was thick with smoke and the reek of guttering candles.(4)

The episodic form closes with Bourne again in no-man's-land, seeing Weeper Smart ahead of him and 'the last of their party disappearing into the mist about twenty yards away', heading back to their trenches. At the very moment when he experiences 'a sense of triumph and escape thrill in him' a bullet rips through his body. Weeper turns and, defying Bourne's dying protestations, carries him back. Then Tozer, leaving Bourne's body in the trench, feels his way down the dug-out steps:

> He pushed aside the blanket screening the entrance, and in the murky light he saw all the men lift their faces, and look at him with patient, almost animal eyes.
> Then they all bowed over their own thoughts again, listening to the shells bumping heavily outside [...]. They sat there silently; each man keeping his own secret.(247)

Those two complementary scenes depict the continuing external sameness and internal anguish of Bourne's companions and bracket the full extent of his life on the Somme.

The Middle Parts of Fortune figures creditably among numerous World War I novels, a selection of which begins with the publication in 1916 of Henri Barbusse's *Under Fire*, a graphic description of hostilities emanating from his war diaries, which greatly influenced writers such as Sassoon and Owen as well as the wartime French civilian population. Two Americans, John Dos Passos with *One Man's Initiation* (1917) and *Three Soldiers* (1921), and E.E. Cummings with *The Enormous Room* (1922), soon followed. Both of these writers were non-combatants who suffered at the hands of anti-American feeling at the time. Nevertheless through their contact with the exigencies of wartime via the ambulance service, they saw another aspect of the war as harrowing and frustrating as that at the front line, described by them with the power to provoke nausea.

Early in the 1920s there appeared concurrently two very successful sets

of sagas, *The Spanish Farm*, a trilogy by R.H. Mottram, and *Parades End*, a tetralogy by Ford Madox Ford. They both combine the reality of war with traditional novelistic family fortunes into which Mottram assimilates a sympathic portrayal of the French and their resentment against all intruders, including the British. Ford, above the standard age for military service when he enlisted, is remembered as an emotional and eccentric figure, but his unsung war service does him credit, and his tetralogy includes some famous evocations of war.

In 1926 T.E. Lawrence published *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, described by E.M. Forster as a 'tentpole of a military chronicle [round which] T.E. has hung an unexampled fabric of portraits, descriptions, philosophies, emotions, adventures, dreams.' Then in 1928 came Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, the most famous book to result from the war, no doubt helped by its unforgettable evocative title. Another German author to achieve memorable results is Arnold Zweig who commenced by writing pro-nationalistic war stories but later changed to anti-war sympathies. His *The Case of Sergeant Grischa* (1928), based on fact, is a story of problems associated with mistaken identity in relation to Russian-German nationality in a wartime setting.

There followed a rush of publications which included Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War* (1928). This work describes the double destruction of man and nature in Flanders. Within his memories of the war there lingers a feeling of guilt at his own survival. In 1928 Siegfried Sassoon began his semi-autobiographical trilogy with *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* followed by *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930) and *Sherston's Progress* (1936). The shock of his abrupt transition from the idyllic life of a young country gentleman to the horror of trench warfare, documented in the trilogy, changed his attitude from one of heroic patriotism to another of protest and

defection from the army. Written from a perspective reflecting his background, his style fails to convince that he is not consciously name dropping. Somewhat similar in disposition, Robert Graves, in his *Goodbye To All That* (1929), racily reports grisly scenes, humorous events and poetical observations, all in adjacent paragraphs, probably intended to show how compressed life is in warfare, although he conveys an alternative impression that he is writing within a publisher's time constraint. Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), also a bestseller, commences in his characteristic masculine way, to see war as an adventure, but becomes a story of disillusionment. At this time Richard Aldington, with *Death of a Hero* (1929), satirised complacency and frivolity in pre-war middle-class and Bohemian England, set against the later slaughter and squalor of life on the Western Front. Included in this 'rush of publications' is H.M. Tomlinson's *All Our Yesterdays* (1930). His reporting as a war correspondent in Flanders and France was regarded by Blunden as 'the best prose in England now', but he was recalled from that posting when his writing was attacked for being 'too human'. However he used his experience to advantage in his novel. His later book, *Out of Soundings* (1931), includes interesting judgments of Zweig, Mottram, Blunden and Owen. Finally in this group is Henry Williamson's *A Patriot's Progress* (1930). Less politically biased than much of his other writing, this is a short and devastating account of trench warfare seen through the eyes of a näive bank clerk, and is one of the most telling of the anti-war novels of the 1930s.

Two other noteworthy books are Helen Thomas's *World Without End* (1931) and Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth* (1933). Both women suffered sad losses in the war, Brittain's fiancé and her brother being killed, and Thomas was the widow of Edward Thomas. Vera Brittain's nursing duties in France contribute the wartime elements in her autobiography. The lives of Helen and Edward Thomas rank highly as typical of shared love and gentle mien shattered

by war. Helen's *World Without End* is a moving personal memorial to their troth.

Chronologically Manning's book, published in 1930 as *Her Privates We*, appeared near the end of the great demand for World War I literature. Although it did enjoy popular acclaim, several critics explain its failure to capture a permanent place in public appeal by its publication date, just too late to catch the crest of the vogue. By then interest in the theme was waning and the book missed the earlier sales bonanza. The critics may be right. The decline in sales could have been interpreted by publishers, through inference by association, as indicative of Manning's poor long term commercial value and thus may account for its sporadic reappearances in bookstores.

Although all of the above selection, in their various ways, equate with *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, the closest resemblance in any of them comes from *All Quiet on the Western Front*. But even there the differences are considerable. Manning's book concentrates on events over a few months in an area of a few square miles:

> Although the work is highly emotional in parts it is restrained in the telling. Never does the action reach beyond the boundaries of the platoon. All movements of body and mind keep strictly within that spotlight. Nor are there any retrospective longings or nostalgic tears.[34]

Remarque's book, on the other hand, covers the course of the war and includes excursions by its main character, Paul Bäumer, back to his home, school and town environments. The resulting sentimentality does not please everybody:

> *All Quiet on the Western Front* had sold 4,000,000 copies, and had the tensions of imagined dread; the young author appeared not to have been in a battle, so deep was the gloom.
> 'The screaming of a feeble man,' wrote T.E. Lawrence to me, and he went on to ask if I had read a two-volume book called *The*

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[34] Leon Gellert, 'Something Personal - Case of Private 19022', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 March, 1948.

> *Middle Parts of Fortune* [...] [and] *Scenes and Portraits* [...]. I got hold of both books and they were, and remain after the years, magnificent.[35]

Similar sentiments are expressed in another criticism, unattributed:[36]

> *Her Privates We* [...] is, perhaps, the best portrayal of the English private soldier as he is and was that has yet to been written. A year ago this book would have made a resounding sensation, and if now the public is satiated with the subject, excellence of this order will undoubtedly survive the moods of the moment. *Her Privates We* will become a classic: future ages will learn from it some true and splendid things about our soldiers. We should advise all who have read *All Quiet on the Western Front* to read *Her Privates We*: both are works of genius, but one is written by a "hysterian," the other by a sane man (of whom, of course, our side had no monolopy).

Lawrence and Williamson are controversial figures whose championing of Manning may disdvantage him, but their literary judgment deserves respect.

All Quiet on the Western Front was made into a successful film in 1930 and remade in the 1970s. The film rights to Manning's book were purchased soon after publication but no film production has resulted. This underlines another difference between them. The majority of the text of *The Middle Parts of Fortune* is devoted to Bourne's musing even though the action, when it eventuates, is spectacular. Remarque's book is mostly narration and therefore transmissible visually, while still containing those essential elements, the war, the fate of a generation and comradeship.

A work more compatible with Manning's is R.C. Sherriff's *Journey's End*,[37] described by G.B. Shaw as a 'useful corrective to the romantic conception of war.' Superficially, through the representation factor just discussed, this work, as a play, might be expected to align with *All Quiet on the Western Front*, but in fact it forms an effective counterpart to

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[35] Henry Williamson, 'This Was The War That Began 50 Years Ago Today', *The Evening Standard*, 4 August, 1964.

[36] *The Spectator*, 25 January, 1930, p.131.

[37] Premièred at the Apollo Theatre, London, on 9 December 1928, and published in 1929.

Manning's book. *The Middle Parts of Fortune* has already been identified here as a dramatic work. Supporting this opinion is its loose compliance with Aristotle's three unities. Important components of it are expressed in Bourne's thoughts, which cannot be conveyed without tedium on a cinema screen, but can be projected across the footlights and have been, in principle, by Sherriff.

There are flaws in *Journey's End* which are obvious after reading *The Middle Parts of Fortune*. The play's enactment is in a dugout whose confines accentuate the good and bad relationships between its officer occupants. However, set construction, fundamental to its successful staging, conflicts with authenticity. The dugout's entrance is open to the sky, an intentional ploy by Sherriff in order to differentiate day from night, and to convey effect through the simulation of flashes from shell bursts and flares. But the reality is, as Manning is often at pains to describe, dugout entrances are heavily screened to prevent the escape of light to enemy observers. Also, and probably indicative of its time, the dialogue is over-strained, suggestive of conversations more appropriate to the 'playing-fields of Arnold's Rugby'.[38] Consequently, despite the fact that Sherriff served as an officer on the Western Front, his version of it in *Journey's End* tends to be forced and artificial.

The nearest approaches to Manning's work, are the books of two Americans writing on the American Civil War in *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) by Stephen Crane, and *Company of Cowards* (1958) by Jack Schaefer. Although neither of these writers had any personal experience of the war they wrote about, their books are masterly portrayals of psychological realism under the ordeal of battle. Their war had much in common with World War I.

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[38] John Gross (Ed.), *The Modern Movement*, (London: Harvill, 1992). From Wyndham Lewis's 'Matthew Arnold' in 'IV. A TLS Treasury', pp.298-300.

It introduced the enormity of modern warfare by recruiting armies of non-professional soldiers, enlisted on fixed terms then later conscripted for the war's duration to inflict mass slaughter in a series of battles of attrition; with deprivation and death to civilians and the destruction of their property, all under widespread questionable leadership.

Crane's protagonist is Henry Fleming, a youth who is, according to the 'Introduction' of one edition, 'serving his apprenticeship to war - timid, terrified, valorous, frenzied, calm, and, at the end, master of his trade'.[39] Indeed resulting from all of these conditions he changes from a gauche idealist, to a deserter in the face of the enemy, to an almost accidental hero. On his return to his regiment with an injury he passes off as a war wound, he is accepted by his comrades and immediately adopts a carefree attitude replacing the anxiety of his expected punishment. Like Manning with Bourne, Crane 'climbs inside Henry Fleming's skull', exampled in expressing the form of Fleming's sudden relief at realising he would not be charged with desertion:

> But he was now, in a measure, a successful man, and he could no longer tolerate in himself a spirit of fellowship for poets. He abandoned them. Their songs about black landscapes were of no importance to him, since his new eyes said that his landscape was not black. People who called landscapes black were idiots. He achieved a mighty scorn for such a snivelling race. [...] He returned to his old belief in the ultimate, astounding success of his life. He, as usual, did not trouble about the processes. It was ordained, because he was a fine creation. He saw plainly that he was the chosen of some gods. By fearful and wonderful roads he was to be led to a crown. He was, of course, satisfied that he deserved it.[40]

Confronting him however throughout his experiences, is death, with its imminence to himself and its horrifying presence all around him in the grotesque bodies of fallen friends, strangers and enemies.

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[39] Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*, (London: The Folio Society, 1964), p.17.

[40] *Op.cit.*, p.111.

Company of Cowards is the story of Jared Heath a mature, experienced campaigner and a well regarded officer.

> The date there [in Heath's journal] indicates that the call he was answering was Lincoln's appeal issued a few days earlier for 42,000 men to serve for three years or the duration of the war. No matter that no one thought then the war would last more than a few months. His enlistment made him one of the regulars, the hard core of duration men who held the Union forces together and served on while the three-month and the six-month and the one-year men came and went and the draft was born of necessity and was corrupted by the bounty and substitute evils that accompanied it. He was a regular, a three-year man, and it was natural he should be. He was the third Jared Heath in direct line to wear an American uniform. [...] Twenty-four at the time, already a partner in the family foundry, solid and compact and competent in mind and body, a staunch Unionist, he knew what he was doing and why. His father's patriotic references to following the old flag and upholding the family tradition may have seemed to him excessive but certainly not off-key. [...] What set him apart, if anything could be said to set him apart at the time, was a slight rarely noticed exaggeration of another aspect of his New England heritage, the proverbial Yankee stubbornness of mind.[41]

Gradually, even subconsciously, he loses faith in the efficacy of war. An incident late in his development could have been written by Manning. Heath's men are bivouacked prior to engaging with the enemy next day:

> Faintly, drifting through the trees to them from a group of men lingering around a fire some twenty yards away, came a voice. 'Hey, Hank. Give us that prayer you was talking of.' Slowly, drawling, deliberately deepened, gently mocking, another voice drifted through the low-branched darkness:
>
> *Our Father who art in Washington,*
> *Uncle Abraham be Thy name....*
>
> It paused and in the pause Lieutenant Wilkeson stiffened. 'Blasphemous!' he said in a hushed shocked whisper. 'Oughtn't I go break it up, sir?'
> 'No!' Captain Heath's voice, held low, had an irritated snap. 'It's no more blasphemous than war itself. And probably just as necessary. Let them alone.'[42]

Heath sees absurdity in an order requiring him to lead his men into a suicidal attack, and for his insubordination in refusing to obey orders he is reduced to the ranks and disgraced. Through the influence of his military

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[41] Jack Schaefer, *Company of Cowards*, (London: Andre Deutsch, 1958), pp.10-12.

[42] *Op.cit.*, p.20.

advocate he is given command, as their nominal sergeant, of a group called 'Company Q' comprising seven other demoted officers convicted of cowardice. After he instills some discipline and pride into them through intelligent leadership, 'Company Q' is transferred from the Civil War zone to a remote region of the western frontier. There, displaying great courage and resourcefulness in which half of the Company is killed and Heath is severely wounded, they rescue an important military detachment ambushed by overwhelming numbers of hostile Indians. As reward the survivors of 'Company Q' are exonerated and reinstated with their rank, added to which Heath has the offer of promotion. He declines, preferring an honourable discharge. His astonished commanding officer's response is:

> *I felt like a fool. I was giving that man what I will never have for myself again - and not one chance but two - a choice - two chances - to be back in the swing again, an officer on the way up. His record wiped clean and two chances to go on and gather more glory for himself and the service.* [...] *I would have said if I was younger, leg or no leg, I would serve under that man myself - I gave him his chances. He just smiled a funny little smile that was not at me - at something way past me somewhere. He just said:* No. Neither one. I am not good officer material.[43]

Like Bourne, Heath has a degree of pride and he judges himself to be too understanding of the rankers to defer, any more, to army standards. The brief summaries of these two books only touch upon their similarities with *The Middle Parts of Fortune.*

Critics refer to Manning's book by its alternative titles, depending upon the edition they read. Mostly their praise varies from approving to lavish although adverse comments do arise, and one is even whimsical. That last critic finds a suggestion of Jane Austin, for which others have derided him. He writes:

> It may seem odd to bracket her with a book the title of which would have made her faint, every page of which has phrases Emma never knew, and every chapter of which bristles with words which

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[43] *Op. cit.*, pp.180-81.

> would have sent all the Bennet ladies into a decline. But the bit about "the demure little person" on page [109] is Jane to the life.[44]

The reference is to the description of Bourne being accompanied by a village girl, at her mother's insistence, on a shopping jaunt for one of his off-duty feasts. And the Colonel is quite correct with his Jane Austin connotation. Bourne 'had always treated women with a little air of ceremony, whatever kind of women they might be.'(107) Manning likewise, in his relationships with women, appears to be reserved, respectful and unsure. Remembering 'Theseus and Hippolyta', as a committed classicist he could be looking over his shoulder for Artemis.

> The critic L.T. Hergenhan[45] concludes that:
>
> Although *Her Privates We* provides a searching exploration of war which ends in a kind of acceptance, it suggests (as in the conclusion) that war is no more finally 'explainable' than is human nature and its destiny.

Hergenhan regards the two short action pieces at the beginning and end as 'the book's *tour de force*, partly because they are necessarily more condensed, moving and dramatic.' And yet he also believes that the book 'is descriptive and analytical rather than dramatic.' In substantiating this latter claim he writes:

> There is no attempt to shape a 'story' out of the period between the two battles; instead we follow the usual experiences in their natural rhythm, ranging through such things as nightmares, 'bon times' at the local estaminets, lice-catching, parades (and their evasion), and route marching. [...] Throughout, Manning shows skill in presenting moods and feelings which pervade a group, momentarily depressing individuality.

Of that individuality, he agrees with *The Times* (17 January, 1930) that although 'the personages are in many cases well drawn, they appear to have been deliberately limited to outine sketches', because this is appropriate

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[44] F.E. Whitton (Lieut.-Colonel), 'Durat in Extremum', *The Bookman*, February, 1930, pp.306-08.

[45] L.T. Hergenhan, 'Frederic Manning: A Neglected Australian Writer', *Quadrant*, No.6, Spring, 1962, pp.5-18.

to a 'representative picture' and also 'the novel', he asserts, 'is meant to show how knowledge of ourselves and our fellows, even the simplest of them, is necessarily incomplete.' Despite this he adds:

> 'Weeper' Smart is an unforgettable incarnation of 'unmitigated misery', at once 'pitiful and repulsive', and yet not simply or primarily a form of self-pity because it proceeds from an unblinking scrutiny of life's miseries. His bitterness contrasts with the acceptance reached by men like Martlow, Bourne and Tozer, and it can be splendidly disinterested and patient.

Some issues Hergenhan raises here are contentious. Propositions in this thesis maintain that Manning is, at heart, a dramatist and that *The Middle Parts of Fortune* is less a novelistic and more a dramatic work. Incidents in his life associate him with the theatre. As a youth he attended West End plays with Bernard Berenson, Laurence Binyon and Max Beerbohm; his first published piece was as a theatre critic reviewing *Hedda Gabler*; at the Abbey Theatre he attended an early performance of Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* and told Eliot it was the central fact of his experience in Ireland; among the writers he most admired were the Hellenic dramatists, then Shakespeare, Molière and Synge; his writing contains a strong feeling for characterisation; he left behind him scraps of dramatic scenarios including the detailed draft of a four act play. Thus he held a significant and sustained interest in theatre. Hergenhan's reading of *The Middle Parts of Fortune* is traditionalist, looking for 'a "story" out of the period between the two battles.' He does not recognise that Manning, in this final flowering introduces, through dramatic form, elements of the paradoxical nature of human existence, which places him firmly in the twentieth century stream of change in drama culminating in 'The Theatre of the Absurd', structuring its style around situations, not stories.

Many other critics have expressed their opinions of the work. An early

response came from Arnold Bennett,[46] in which, after commenting on the futility of its author's anonymity and its unsatisfactory title 'attributed to the secondary effect of a poor pun', he describes the work as 'an inspiring and beautiful book!' He continues, 'I would not mislead you.' -

> The book is not grandiose; it has no ingeniously calculated "effects"; it has indeed here and there a dull page or so; the best thing in it, after the culminating, futile, fatal attack (Somme and Ancre 1916), is a long recital of an alcoholic and extremely earthy jollity. It has little or no "serial interest" in the usual significance of the term. Indeed to serialise it would be to ruin it. It depends for its moral magic on a continuous veracity, consistent, comprehending, merciful, and lovely. It is admirably written. *The Middle Parts of Fortune* will be remembered when *All Quiet on the Western Front*, with all its excellences, is forgotten. It goes deeper. It is bound to survive as a major document in war-literature.

Some critics persist with a tiresome questioning whether any 'educated and imaginative' author can accurately render the experience of British privates in World War I. One such is A.C. Ward who writes:

> the British private soldier's tale of himself between 1914 and 1918 is still untold. A man of letters does not become a private soldier by the simple step of enlisting, nor can he do it in any other way. He remains throughout an educated and imaginative man to whom the War was an experience different from that which the uneducated unimaginative passed through; and however socially mixed the army may have been, the latter type is properly meant by the term "private." Unless it should chance to be done almost casually through the medium of slow and fragmentary dictation, it is probable that the British private's view of the War will never be give at length.[47]

Ward partly rehabilitates himself by adding, 'From the very first sentence it is clear that this is to be a book which penetrates beyond blood and clamour to the spiritual resistances that give whatever meaning there is to the tragedy of war.' But his first statement is a snobbish double slur, firstly against the men characterised by Manning in Shem, Martlow and Smart, and secondly against men like Manning himself, of whom there must have been many who served in the ranks.

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[46] Andrew Mylett (Ed.), *Arnold Bennett: The "Evening Standard" Years, "Books and Persons," 1926-1931*, 'A Tale of the Private's War'. (London: Archon Books, 1974), pp.341-43.

[47] A.C. Ward, 'The Unhappy Warriors', *The Nineteen-Twenties: Literature and Ideas in the Post-War Decade*, (London: Methuen, 1930), pp.140-67.

Opposing Ward's attitude is C. Kaeppel's, who believes Manning has shown 'how war appears to a normal soldier, for he was at once a normal soldier and a genius, and, showing this, he strikes that note which is to be heard in all great English literature - that there are more things worse than death.' Kaeppel observes:

> What the reading public has lacked is [...] the real record from a private's point of view, a work not simply photographic, but with the imaginative insight to realise and portray what lay behind all happenings. Now it has got it, from an author who was at once soldier, scholar and artist. It is significant that every chapter is headed with a passage from Shakespeare [...]; there, if ever, was a poet who understood war and soldiers, and by his felicitous quotations, to speak of nothing else, Manning shows that he had much of the Shakespearen outlook.[48]

Another critic from the Secondary Sources listed in the Bibliography, is Edmund Blunden who regards the book as:

> an instance of new literature not at war with the centuries of thought, feeling and form which had preceeded it, but qualified for the attention of the coming race by the author's deep regard for the creative past and his observation of and reflection on his own world. [...] he was obviously of that heroic make which even in most frightful and startling actions and sufferings can notice what is going on all around, to be recorded later in the urgent yet governed style of *Her Privates We* from beginning to end.[49]

Finally C.N. Smith sees the work as

> the carefully thought-out response to war itself. Manning makes a distinction - a valuable one - between the individual's response to the grave dangers of battle and the rather different way men react to the multiple pressures of army life when the battalion is withdrawn from the front line. In both situations Manning finds positive values. He is not a militarist or an enthusiastic soldier; he does not come, as Jünger does in his *Storm of Steel*, to prize conflict as a unique, tonic experience. But in [*The Middle Parts of Fortune*] there is a complex portrait of the infantrymen's lot in the First World War which goes some way to explain how they managed to endure while, as R.H. Mottram put it, the Great Powers maintained 'during years, a population as large as that of London, on an area as large as that of Wales, for the sole purpose of wholesale slaughter by machinery'

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[48] C. Kaeppel, 'Frederic Manning, Soldier, Scholar, Artist.', *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol.7, No.26, June 1935, pp.47-50.

[49] Edmund Blunden, Introduction to *Her Privates We* (London: Peter Davies,1964).

(Preface to *Sixty-four, Ninety-four*).[50]

These views are representative of the range of criticisms *The Middle Parts of Fortune* has attracted following each new edition since its first limited one in 1929 and unrestricted publication in 1930. The range is explained partly by the fact that the book covers probably the most emotionally and controversially viewed period of action in military history, many readers' responses being coloured by their standing and opinions with respect to that fact, and their perception of book's authenticity. As a literary work Manning's book is applauded for its innovative approach to a well used subject. He adds to it the interpretation of the impact of war and army life on individuals, more subtly differentiated than is found in other First World War fiction.

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[50] C.N. Smith, "The Very Plain Song of It: Frederic Manning, 'Her Privates We'" in *The First World War in Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by H.M. Klein, [1976],(London: Barnes and Noble, 1977), pp.174-82.

CONCLUSION

Frederic Manning's potentiality to become a public figure was thwarted by his insistence upon privacy. His friend T.E. Lawrence was a very private person also, but he made such a public issue of his privacy that he attracted attention by it and will forever remain a celebrity. The similarity they share is their literary skill and the practice of that is popularly regarded as 'solitary' work. Their difference lies in Lawrence's adventurous life, contrasted against Manning's retirement relieved only partially by his animated interaction with a small concentration of close friends and his brief, and seemingly uncharacteristic, interlude as a soldier. It is unlikely he will become a celebrity now, but his reputation as a writer may well improve.

Manning was not by nature a recluse, as is clear from his fluency in conversation and letter writing, and in his travels to Ireland, the Continent and to Australia. On the contrary one senses a craving for companionship behind his retreat into isolation. His letters to friends contain invitations to visit him, sometimes offering as encouragements a choice of dates and alternatives from railway time-tables. As well his letters, while in the army, distinguish his appreciation of the difference between loneliness and silence. In January 1916 during military training in a recruit camp, Manning wrote that although subjected to many discomforts he did not

> want to escape from the men, because I have honestly come to love them, with all their faults and defects, which they carry bravely enough as being their own concern.

Instead he luxuriated in the time after 'lights out' when the 'hut's babel has been stilled in sleep, and I could sit up in bed with a cigarette thinking mine own thoughts: the only freedom left me.'[1] Then he could 'escape into a silence that is not of sleep. It is like a bath of quiet, one

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[1] Rothenstein papers, letter dated 24 January, 1916.

can almost feel its coolness rippling, upon the flesh.' But years later, in his farmhouse in Chobham, Surrey, where solitude was normal to him and silence no longer a luxury, he wrote:

> I seem to grow more alone every day of my life. True, I lunch and dine with my neighbours from time to time, but I doubt whether they exist.[2]

A less fatalistic acceptance of, and a more realistic confrontation with, his problems, of which his drinking was an effect rather than a cause, would have propelled him beyond the admired and respected friend he was to a few in private, to achieve the high public regard many thought he merited, and as a result a much better known writer for it. Yet he felt compassion for others - 'I saw Binyon who looked tired and overworked. I wish I saw more of him.'[3]

While in the army he communicated his reflections upon art, and literature in particular, to William Rothenstein, using that artist as his sounding board much as in earlier years he had used Fairfax. He wrote to Rothenstein:

> Every book on aesthetic, which I have read, speaks of art as tho' in a masterpiece there were two things: form and content, style and matter. To me, and I have always tried to drive the matter home in criticising poetry for 'The Spectator' there is simply motion: beauty results when words are easily traversed by an idea, when the continuity is unbroken, and the movement is complete. The unity of a work of art is simply the unity of a single and complete motion [...].[4]

Another approach to his appreciation of poetry, more philosophical than the above and embodying the 'motion' he advocates there, is taken from a review of his discussed in Chapter 3, but not quoted there:

> Life is eternal only on the condition of change; and poetry, the perfect expression of life, is equally mutable, seeking always new modes of utterance, yet preserving through all its changing forms, even as life itself does, that elusive quality which is

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[2] *Op.cit.*, letter dated 9 October, 1925.

[3] *Op.cit.*, letter dated 30 March, 1920.

[4] *Op.cit.*, letter dated 24 January, 1916.

essential to its being. At times the divine fire dwindles among its ashes, but a breath will quicken it again. It is spontaneous, secret, and comes suddenly upon a man, or upon a race, with the swift ecstasy of a religious illumination that seems to change in one moment the whole aspect of life. It passes as swiftly. We can only record its apparitions at divers times in divers places, its infinite variety and its essential unity, the light that was Homer, or Virgil, or Dante, Shakespeare or Milton, Sophocles or Lope de Vega, each with its own clear-cut, flawless individuality, complete in itself; each a mode of perfection, a voice that is not for a season but for all time. We cannot define it; we cannot analyse its beauty; it eludes us; and yet it persists.[5]

Themes recurring throughout Manning's canon, and consistent with his life, are religion, faith, war, fatalism, and dramatic construction. In his coverage of them he articulates, with the certainty of his convictions, the knowledge gained from his impressive breadth of reading, all expressed clearly and precisely. In his lifetime only the most erudite or the most foolish chose to debate a point in literature with him. His personality is summed up in an example of Shakespearean eloquence with its classical Greek succinctness, those being two of Manning's touchstones:

> He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one;
> Exceeding wise, fair spoken, and persuading:
> Lofty and sour to them that lov'd him not;
> But to those men that sought him, sweet as summer.[6]

The history of Christian religion and the impact of its dogma on individuality occupies much of Manning's writing. The subject appears in his first publication, *The Vigil of Brunhild*, where the question of its significance in Brunhild's fate is thoroughly investigated; its treatment in *Scenes and Portraits* is mostly historical, through which means the significance of religious belief to the individual is viewed against the struggle to understand life's purpose; in his poetry, and more so there in the long narrative poems than in the shorter verse, the interaction between

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[5] Manning, 'Two Books of Italian Verse', *The Spectator*, 28 January, 1911, p.119.

[6] *Henry VIII*, IV.ii. 51-54.

religion and fate in pagan times is, in part, compared with Christian examples. In his reviewing for literary journals he continues his theme as the opportunities arise. Religion also forms a subtext to events in *The Golden Coach*, but in *The Middle Parts of Fortune* a change takes place, and religion is subordinated to a much more subjective analysis of faith which, he observes, assumes a far greater importance with soldiers facing death.

Manning's findings on religion are that custom alone, the pooled experience of many generations, gives continuity to communal life, and expresses itself in laws and religion. Originally these two were one, with religion being social and not individual, the individual not being separated from the community. Then corresponding to the evolution of a divinity, a similar evolution in the social structure took place, with ritual ceasing to be performed in community and handed over to a group of individuals, or one individual with attendants. Then political functions began to separate themselves from the priestly until eventually, when the separation became complete, a solid body of political habit had formed under another head. The individual egoisms which had dissolved the body of religious dogma, then attacked the body of social dogma in its turn, 'to resemble a chemical process in which solution and precipitation succeed each other with monotonous regularity.' The community, from a single cell, became an organic body, the political functions being exercised by one organ, the religious by another; the result was the exclusion of the priest from the material concerns of life, to be left supreme in the sphere of idealism.

Now, Manning concludes, religion represents all the stages of its development, including in a single body the mass of the people who remain - at one end rooted in their old beliefs and superstitions, and at the other end those to whom it is a system of metaphysics, or a symbol of some purely mystical experience:

> It has ceased to act directly upon society, it acts upon the individual, it opposes the ideal to the real world. It assumes eternity for each individual soul, and automatically its ideals and values become absolute. It supplies the ideal standards by which society is to be judged; and hence that theological zeal which animates social reformers in all ages, the blind partisanship, the reckless assertion, the interminable casuistry, the apparent conviction, itself almost a passion, by which they attempt to conceal the fact that they are not quite sure.[7]

Manning's attention to religion is rivalled, even outdone, by his attention to warfare. This subject appears, at various levels, in the majority of his works, from *The Vigil of Brunhild*, 'Theseus and Hippolyta', 'Helgi of Lithend' and the first section of *Eidola* in his poetry, to *The Life of Sir William White* and *The Middle Parts of Fortune* in his prose. The commission to write White's biography arose out of the patron's acquaintance with Manning's military service, following his necessity, through poor health, to withdraw from a similar promise on Kitchener. His war poetry and *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, it is submitted here, are progressions from the earlier works, combined with, of course, his experiences on the Somme and Ancre battlefields in 1916, which were an incomparable source of material.

Another term in the progression is Manning's compromise between opposites, when the stirring of Modernism through the originality he recognises in William Morris, Thomas Hardy and J.M. Synge conflicts with the Arnoldian and Victorian influences he inherited from Arthur Galton. But there is a much more significant development in him. Herbert Read, in the vanguard of early commentaries on Modernism in the arts, states:

> It is natural to ask [...] whether the very diverse speculations and discoveries of the modern science of art [...] have received any integration within a modern system of philosophy. No modern philosopher can now safely neglect this sphere of the human spirit, but it is to be doubted whether any one has given it an adequate or just place within a united view of the universe.

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[7] Manning, 'Greek Genius and Greek Democracy', *The Edinburgh Review*, April 1913, Vol.217, No. 444, pp.340-41.

> [...] It is only in the work of Henri Bergson that I personally have found any treatment of art which is at once scientific in its basis and philosophical in its aim.[8]

Manning was conversant with Bergson's philosophy, using references to him in two letters, to Fairfax and to Rothenstein.[9] In them he applied Bergson's theory of the comic to the unlikely circumstances of a diverting domestic disturbance at the vicarage and to an army drunken brawl, demonstrating that he understood Bergson's concept of 'the disparity between the ideal and the reality.' Herbert Read, in his book, goes on to quote Bergson:

> 'From time to time, in a fit of absent-mindedness, nature raises up souls that are more detached from life. Not with that intentional, logical, systematical detachment - the result of reflection and philosophy, but rather with a natural detachment, one innate in the structure of sense or consciousness, which at once reveals itself by a virginal manner, so to speak, of seeing, hearing, or thinking. [...] Beneath the thousand rudimentary actions which are the outward and visible signs of an emotion, behind the common-place, conventional expression that both reveals and conceals an individual mental state, it is the emotion, the original mood, to which they attain in its undefiled essence. And then, to induce us to make the same effort ourselves, they contrive to make us see something of what they have seen: by rhythmical arrangement of words, which thus become organised and animated with a life of their own, they tell us - or rather suggest - things that speech was not calculated to express. Others delve deeper still. Beneath these joys and sorrows which can, at a pinch, be translated into language, they grasp something that has nothing in common with language, certain rhythms of life and breath that are closer to man than his inmost feelings, being the living law - varying with each individual - of his enthusiasm and despair, his hopes and regrets.'[10]

The adoption of these principles by Manning in the war poetry of *Eidola* and in *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, shows how his experience of war 'modernised' him.

The Middle Parts of Fortune approaches its climax with the men preparing themselves physically and emotionally for battle. Manning sees

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[8] Herbert Read, *Art Now*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), [1933], pp.52-53.

[9] Fairfax papers, No.88, letter dated 4 November, 1910, and Rothenstein papers, letter dated 26 December, 1915.

[10] Read, pp.53-54.

them turning their backs on theoretical hopes and drawing faith from the practical values already tested among them:

> These apparently rude and brutal natures comforted, encouraged, and reconciled each other to fate, with a tenderness and tact which was more moving than anything in life. They had nothing; not even their own bodies, which had become mere implements of warfare. They turned from the wreckage and misery of life to an empty heaven, and from an empty heaven to the silence of their own hearts. They had been brought to the last extremity of hope, and yet they put their hands on each other's shoulders and said with a passionate conviction that it would be all right, though they had faith in nothing, but in themselves and in each other.[11]

This statement is a powerful paradox. It is a dreadful indictment of war's degradation of men into lost souls and dispensable chattels, accompanied by its simultaneously endowing them, in their peril, with the fortitude to trust in their survival through their mutual compassion and reliance. Manning's paragraph prompts a comparison with Binyon's revered 'For the Fallen', written in 1914 during the first surge of patriotism and read every year at most commemorative services. The poem is an admirable eulogy to the men both of them grew to know and understand, but how refreshing would be the reading of Manning's statement at such an assemblage.

> The preface to *The Middle Parts of Fortune* poses the question:
>
> War is waged by men; not by beasts, or by gods. It is a peculiarly human activity. To call it a crime against mankind is to miss at least half its significance; it is also the punishment of a crime. That raises a moral question, the kind of problem with which the present age is disinclined to deal. Perhaps some future attempt to provide a solution for it may prove to be even more astonishing than the last.

The crime to which Manning alludes is a crime *within* mankind, containing the inference of 'original sin'. The 'future attempt to provide a solution' has produced a bizarre response in this present age obsessed with the sophistry of euphemisms and the oxymoron 'political correctness'. Military forces continue to kill and destroy, by using firepower hitherto unbelievably

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[11] Manning, *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, p.205.

potent, and they are called peace keepers. Lice infested soldiers on the Western Front drowning in mud or watching the bodies of their friends and enemies 'burnt black by strange decay'[12] being eaten by rats, would judge this state of affairs as hypocritical and/or a betrayal. The answer to Manning's moral question requires for its solution an unprecedented strength of purpose and integrity in leadership, such as he, a fatalist, would not have expected, and which, if it could have occurred, would have done so only in circumstances 'astonishing' to the point of being cataclysmic.

The war poet with whom Manning is most closely aligned is Isaac Rosenberg. Quicker than most of the others, they changed their perspective from the shallow appeal of patriotic fervour to the reality of war's appalling cost in human life and suffering. But they both expressed this calmly, free from emotional self-indulgence, with the result that their poetry is remarkable for the restrained anger in its directness. Thus, unlike their compeers, they tend not to point accusatory fingers or lay blame.

Underlying Manning's writing is his sense of drama which was never realised in a finished work for the theatre, even though he coupled his dramatic touch with a fine regard for characterisation. Male characters tend to predominate in his works, an impression possibly influenced by the overpowering effect of *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, but even there he introduces some life-like females. More comprehensively, from a widely encompassing list of women he understood through study and others he knew in life - Brunhild, Hippolyta, Artemis, Gudrun, Persephone, the Countess Golovine, Jelly d'Aranyi, Olivia and Dorothy Shakespear, and Eva Fowler - he could be expected to have applied his irony and reticence in forming a

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[12] Isaac Rosenberg, 'Dead Man's Dump'.

character to rival Antigone and Cordelia.

Based on the diversity of material and consistent quality of Frederic Manning's canon, as revealed in this thesis, I am confident in concluding that his reputation as a writer will increase as further research comes to be devoted to his many-faceted life and works.

APPENDIX I

Poems by Frederic Manning published individually, 1906-1926

			Page
1906			
19 May	*Outlook*	'Bal Masque'	686
16 June	*Outlook*	'The Secret'	814
1909			
July	*Atlantic Monthly*	'Noon', reprinted in *Poems*	101
December	*The English Review*	'Persephone', reprinted as 'Kore' in *Poems*	6
1910			
12 March	*The Spectator*	'Hecate', reprinted as 'Canzone' in *Poems*	423-24
May	*The English Review*	'Hera Parthenia'	196
May	*The English Review*	'To Artemis the Destroyer'	197
1911			
February	*Forum*	'Danae's Song', reprinted as'Danae' in *Eidola*	151
April	*The English Review*	'The Vision of Demeter'	7
1912			
6 January	*The Spectator*	'The Mother', reprinted in *Eidola*	18
19 October	*Country Life*	'Ganhardine's Song', reprinted in *Eidola*	512
1913			
February	*Windsor Magazine*	'Winter', reprinted in *Eidola*	357
26 April	*The Spectator*	'Passe-Pied', reprinted as 'Hurleywane' in *Eidola*	715
June	*Poetry*	'Simaetha', reprinted in *Eidola*	99
June	*Poetry*	'At Even'	100
June	*Poetry*	'From Demeter (The Faun's Call'), reprinted as 'The Faun' in *Eidola*	100
1916			
July	*Poetry*	'Sacrifice', reprinted in *Eidola*	181-82
8 July	*The Spectator*	'The Choosers', reprinted in *Eidola*	44-45

APPENDIX I
(cont.)

1917			
January	*Poetry*	'Anacreontic', reprinted as 'The Cup' in *Eidola*	186
January	*The Quest*	'Bois de Mametz: August 16', reprinted as 'Bois de Mametz' in *Eidola*	333-35
1919			
July	*The Chapbook*	'Echo'	29
1926			
20 February	*Irish Statesman*	'Animae Suae'	736

APPENDIX II

The Spectator

Articles by Frederic Manning, 1909-1920

		Page
1909		
18 December	'Shakespearean Criticism'	1055-56
1910		
16 April	'Milton'	625-26
2 July	'Southey's Poems'	22-23
23 July	'The Genius of Swift'	134-35
10 September	'A French Critic on Lyly'	391-92
8 October	'George Sand'	560-61
22 October	'The Etruscans'	651-52
29 October	'Balzac and the *Comédie Humaine*'	694-95
1911		
28 January	'Two Books of Italian Verse'	119
18 March	'The Correspondence of Swift'	402-03
1 April	'The Work of J.M.Synge'	482-83
22 April	'The Influence of Greece'	602-03
20 May	'Mr Zangwill's Fantasies'	772
17 June	'The Memoirs of the Countess Golovine'	930-31
24 June	'Molière malgré lui'	969-70
8 July	'William Morris'	69-71
19 August	'Samuel Rogers'	283-84
2 September	'Lafcadio Hearn in Japan'	346-47
23 September	'Coleridge'	458-59
7 October	'Robert Louis Stevenson'	549-50
14 October	'On Translating Dante'	599-600
23 December	'French Poetry'	1123
30 December	'Shelley'	1154-55
1912		
27 January	'The Symposiarch'	153-54
16 March	'French Literature'	444-45
30 March	'The Elizabethans'	514-15
13 April	'Gray'	586-87
27 April	'De Contemptu Mundi'	647-48
1 June	'John Andrew Doyle'	874-75
22 June	'The Literature of Power'	991-92
13 July	'Travel and Pilgrimage'	59-60
27 July	'William Langland'	130-31
7 September	'Novels of Character and Environment'	335-37
28 September	'English Prose Rhythm'	453-54
19 October	'The Borgia Family'	601-02
9 November	'Tales of Autolycus'	752-53
23 November	'Letters to William Allingham'	861-62
7 December	'Meredith's Poems'	931-32
21 December	'The Poetry of Coleridge'	1063-64

APPENDIX II
(cont.)

1913		
11 January	'Richelieu'	64-65
15 March	'The Crock of Gold'	453-54
12 April	'Swift's Friendships'	618-19
1 November	'Lyric Poetry'	683
1 November	'Frederick Tennyson'	721
1914		
10 January	'Formal Poetry'	58-59
4 April	'The Poetry of Blake'	567
25 April	'Cesare Borgia'	702-03
16 May	'Spenser's Sonnets in French'	835
27 June	'The Age of Johnson'	1091-92
4 July	'A Life of Francis Thompson'	18-19
1915		
24 July	'The Poet as Virtuoso'	114-15
27 November	'Swift's Last Years'	745-46
1919		
20 December	'Rhythm in Verse'	864
1920		
10 January	'Some Winchester Letters'	51-52
3 April	'Prosody and Shakespeare'	459-60

APPENDIX III

The Criterion

Articles by Frederic Manning, 1924-1927

		Page
1924		
July	'Le Père Hyacinthe', Vol.II, No.8	460-67
October	*Greek Historical Thought; Greek Civilization and Character*, Arnold J. Toynbee; *Greek Literary Criticism*, T.D. Denniston, Vol.III, No.9	134-37
1925		
January	*Courte Histoire du Christianisme*, Albert Houtin; *Le Mystère du Jésus*, S.L. Couchond; *Propos sur le Christianisme*, Alain; *La Sibylle*, Th. Zielinski, Vol.III, No.10	320-21
1926		
January	'A French Criticism of Newman', Vol.IV, No.1	19-31
June	*Un Prêtre Symboliste: Marcel Hébert; Une Vie de Prêtre: Mon Expérience*, Albert Houtin, Vol.IV, No.3	590-93
1927		
September	'A Note on Sir James Frazer', Vol.VI, No.3	197-205
November	*Carmen, et quelques autres nouvelles de Prosper Mérimée.* Introduction de M. Valéry Larboud, Vol.VI, No.5	448-55

APPENDIX IV

Miscellaneous prose by Frederic Manning, 1900-1924

			Page
1900			
3 November	*Sydney Daily Telegraph*	'Ibsen'	11
1904			
16 July	*Outlook*	'The Organ Monkey'[?]	609
1905			
18 November	*Westminster Gazette*	'An Interlude'	4
1911			
	Cornish Brothers Illustrated Christmas Catalogue of Books	'Some Contemporary Poets'	58-59
1913			
April	*Edinburgh Review*	'Greek Genius and Greek Democracy'	334-51
1919			
Feb./March	*The Little Review*	'M. de Gourmont and the Problem of Beauty'	19-26
29 March	*Nation*	'An Unionist's *Apologia*'	773-74
23 October	*Piccadilly Review*	'The Poetry of Mr Binyon'	7
1920			
Easter	*Coterie*	'Three Fables'	17-19
-	*Twenty-Four Portraits*, William Rothenstein, (London: 1920)	'Dean Inge'	n.p.
1921			
April	*The Chapbook*	'Poetry in Prose'	10-15
3 September	*New Statesman*	'Libertinism and St Évremond'	593-94
24 September	*New Statesman*	'The Port of London'	682-83
1924			
July	*The Quarterly Review*	'Critic and Aesthetic'	123-44

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